

DOUG IRELAND • CHRISTOPHER HITCHENS • DAVID MOBERG • NAOMI KLEIN

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Editorial

The Problem with Evil

The slaughter of thousands of innocent people in the attacks on the World Trade Center and the Pentagon gives rise to sharp emotions—numbness, sorrow, horror, despair, fear, anger, revenge and hate. All these feelings are understandable. Not all are noble.

In the wake of this atrocity, President George W. Bush is talking war. He defined the enemy stalking our world as an "evil" force. He characterized this war as "a monumental struggle of good versus evil."

Rallying the nation against dark forces may accomplish the administration's political objectives—putting a white hat on Bush while priming public opinion for the counterattack, and death of more innocent people, that is sure to follow. But pandering to people's fear of evil does nothing to promote peace. Indeed, it stokes the worst in human nature.

In Chicago after the attacks, a Muslim grade school was attacked with a Molotov cocktail; "Kill the Arabs" graffiti was scrawled along a major thoroughfare; more than 300 people waving American flags marched on a mosque in suburban Bridgeview.

Yes, people throughout history have done immensely cruel things to their fellow human beings. In some cases, the perpetrators are innately bad seeds—evil, if you will. Yet that is all too simple.

Eighteenth-century Americans and English gave smallpox-infected blankets to the Indians. Southern plantation owners traded captive African slaves like animals. Upstanding citizens persecuted German-Americans in World War I and Japanese-Americans in World War II. Members of the U.S. military bombed the people of Vietnam back to the Stone Age. This is not to mention the ongoing imposition by some Western leaders of sanctions against Iraq that have cost perhaps a million lives.

Were these historical actors all evil? Or were they, more often than not, normal folks who employed rationalizations to deny the humanity of people who were different, who were "the enemy," or who were conveniently deemed less than human to bolster the power of the established order?

One can also play the game of comparing crimes. The day after the bombings, the *New York Times*' Clyde Haberman took the your-atrocity-is-bigger-than-mine approach. He used the attacks on New York and Washington to justify Israel's policy of targeted killings, asking "Do you get it now?" to those who "damned Israel for taking admittedly harsh measures to keep its citizens alive."

In a similar vein, other commentators, mostly on the left, have explained, in some ways excused, the attacks as the understandable reaction of people subjugated to years of persecution.

All of these relativist justifications are problematic. They deny the power of human agency and thereby excuse the inexcusable—attacks on the World Trade Center and the Pentagon by Islamic extremists or Israel's state-sponsored assassinations. An action (or reaction) may be understandable—we do get it—but that doesn't make it right.

It is no help at all for Bush to simplify the situation as a battle between good and evil. Such a stance, though publicly palatable, reduces things to such a degree that all subtlety and complexity is gone.

As Gary Younge observed in the *Guardian* of London: "Right now America needs a statesman, but wants a cowboy. Bush must steel himself to lead, not allow himself to follow."

Pandering to people's fear of evil does not promote peace. Indeed, it stokes the worst in human nature.

Alas, this president, apparently incapable of speaking on his own, is not up to the task. When Bush, puppet-like, repeatedly invokes the word "evil," his peaceful intentions, indeed his competence, must be questioned.

Too often in modern history the inhuman "enemy" has been deemed "evil" as a prelude to mass death. Such was the thinking, no doubt, that went through the heads of the men who plotted the carnage visited on New York and Washington. But for our elected leaders to respond with the same kind of mindset can only make this tragic situation worse.

Joel Bleifuss

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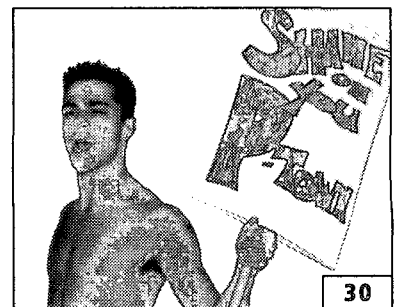
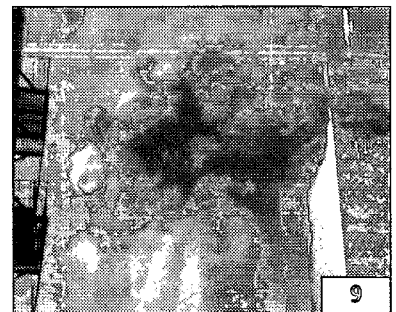
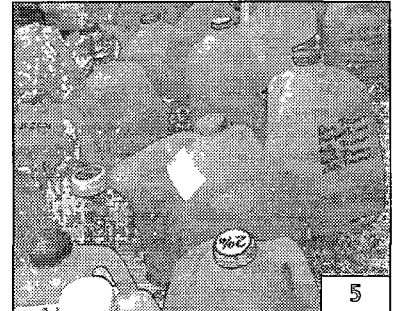
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Letters

War Criminal

Doug Ireland, in his review of Christopher Hitchens' *The Trial of Henry Kissinger*, hit the nail on the head when he cites Cyprus to illustrate "episodes that have received little or no attention" ("Take Him Away," August 20). Most in this country don't want to know, or want to forget, the U.S. role in the events of 1974 that led to the death of some 5,000 to 10,000 people and the violent uprooting of 200,000 on that small island.

Hitchens, however, missed stronger evidence in the House hearings on U.S. foreknowledge of the Greek junta's plans to eliminate Cypriot President Makarios. The summary provided in the declassified portion of the CIA *post mortem* states: "Intelligence provides explicit warning of growing confrontation. ... Ioannides threatens action against Makarios."

Committee staff gave June 20, 1974 as the date of the warning. On June 27, the head of CIA operations in Greece met with Ioannides, who described his plans, according to an August 1 report in the *New York Times*. What the U.S. response was to the junta's plans has never been made public.

Anne M. Rice
Great Falls, Virginia

British Riots

I would endorse much of David Bacon's article about the riots in Britain ("Divided Kingdom," August 20)—especially arguments that immigration controls are racist and the conclusion that we need more immigration. But there are two ways in which the article doesn't really get to grips with the issues.

First, these riots are not really "race riots"—they are overwhelmingly anti-police riots. The usual story is that small numbers of neo-Nazis, associated with either the National Front or British National Party, deliberately provoke clashes with members of Asian communities in a series of rundown towns and cities, which are marked by high levels of unemployment and poverty. The response by young members of these communities—usually born here in Britain rather than being immigrants—is militant self-defense, which comes into conflict with heavy-handed and often rather stupid policing.

It is true that the Nazis have worked hard to get electoral support from the poor white communities and received

significant votes (but nowhere near the scale of the National Front vote in the '70s) in places like Oldham and Burnley. Their fallacious arguments about crime and relative levels of privilege—often helped by the role of the media—have achieved a resonance. However, to give the impression that riots are fundamentally black youths versus white youths is far from accurate.

Second, the disgusting and racist asylum laws and policies that both Labour and Conservative governments have implemented are connected to the level of racism in the country. Both parties seem to unite in denouncing "bogus" asylum seekers and outdo each other in ever more draconian and inhumane measures to deal with the issue. This is a perfect backdrop for the hardline racists and neo-Nazis to spread their poison. But this isn't just an issue about black and white. Many of the targets of this racism are white Europeans—Albanian Kosovars (so recently the victims whose treatment was used to justify the humanitarian bombing of Serbia) in particular.

Matthew Caygill
Leeds, England

Stop Star Wars

Bruce Gagnon of the Global Network Against Weapons and Nuclear Power in Space is wrong when he tells Geov

Parrish that Peace Action, the country's largest peace and disarmament organization with more than 76,000 members nationwide, has refused to take a position against Theater Missile Defense (TMD) because of our love of the Democrats ("The Pentagon's Trojan Horse," July 23).

We are opposed to Star Wars missile defense in all its incarnations. We oppose TMD for precisely the reasons stated in the article. Furthermore, as a grassroots citizens movement dedicated to building real, effective opposition to Star Wars, we certainly aren't going to take our cues from Sen. Joe Biden and the Democratic Leadership Council.

With the Bush administration on a crash course to deploy Star Wars, break the Anti-Ballistic Missile Treaty and start a new nuclear arms race, it is crucial that these reckless initiatives be met with our unified opposition. Peace Action's National Congress, to be held in Austin, Texas from November 9 to 11, is titled "The Race to Space: The Renewed Risk of Nuclear War," and has opposition to Star Wars and weapons in space as its major themes. Contact us at (202) 862-9740 or www.peace-action.org if you would like to be part of an effective opposition to Star Wars, weapons in space and a new nuclear arms race.

Scott Lynch
Peace Action
Washington

Terry LaBan



Trouble on the Home Front

Vicente Fox's popularity is soaring—in the United States

By Martin Espinoza

For months, Mexican President Vicente Fox has managed to stay one step ahead of the growing reality that little has changed in Mexico since his election last year, which toppled the autocratic regime that had controlled Mexican politics for 71 years. His critics charge that, after nine months in office, Fox has failed to make good on his pre-election promise to spur economic growth, end government corruption and negotiate a peaceful solution to armed uprisings in Mexico's poorest regions.

On July 2, the anniversary of his democratic triumph, Fox stole headlines from his detractors by marrying his spokeswoman and ending his controversial status as Mexico's most eligible bachelor. More recently, in early September—only days after the Mexican public coldly received his first state of the union address—Fox traveled to Washington for a high-profile state dinner at the White House and a speech before a joint session of Congress, in which he spoke boldly in defense of millions of Mexican immigrants. By focusing on the plight of immigrants in the United States, Fox shrewdly tapped into Mexican nationalism and the bitter resentment of a country that for centuries has been a doormat for the United States.

Not only was Fox able to regain his hero's status, but his visit helps President Bush make further inroads into a growing constituency. Media analyst and pollster Sergio Bendixen told *La Jornada*, a left-leaning Mexican daily, that Bush is trying to "exorcise" anti-

immigrant dogma from the Republican Party, and "Vicente Fox is the exorcist."

Hispanics represent a powerful voting bloc that Bush and other Republicans can no longer ignore. The number of registered Hispanic voters grew last year to more than 8 million, up from 5 million in 1994. The Hispanic vote was 7 percent last year and is expected to be 10 percent in the next presidential election. What's more, Hispanics are centered in the most important electoral states: California, New York, Texas, Illinois and Florida. In the 2000 election, most Hispanics remained loyal Democrats, though pre-election polls showed that many maintained a favorable opinion of Bush. Bendixen said that in recent months



Fox has said he is president of 118 million people, 18 million of whom are living in the United States.

Bush's popularity among Hispanics shot up from 42 percent to 70 percent.

While Bush is seeking votes, Fox is seeking dollars. Fox has made no secret of Mexico's growing dependence on immigrant dollars—Mexicans in the United States sent some \$7 million back to their families last year. Fox has encouraged Mexicans abroad to help fund public works projects in Mexico. He has said he would match the amount of money immigrants send back dollar for dollar.

There's a degree of desperation in Fox's asking America's worst paid residents for help—as if there were little he could do to improve Mexico's ailing economy. But that may indeed be the case. Since the economic crisis of 1994, most Mexicans have been struggling to

get back on their feet. The current economic slowdown has had a devastating effect on Mexico, which sells 85 percent of its exports to the United States. The low-wage *maquiladoras* that now dominate Mexico's industrial landscape offer no incentive for Mexicans to stay in their country. NAFTA has done little in the past seven years to reduce the country's poverty rates; up to 60 percent of Mexico's population lives in some degree of poverty.

During Fox's visit, Bush told reporters that only by strengthening its middle class can Mexico control its borders. That's easier said than done. Significantly raising salaries and thus Mexico's standard of living is unlikely, given the country's role as a low-wage haven for multinationals in the new global economy. Instead, as a way of generating much needed revenue, Fox has been pushing a fiscal reform package that includes a 15 percent tax on food and medicine. The revenue proposal, soundly rejected by the Mexican Congress and the public, represents Fox's biggest political failure yet. Add to that his inability to create new jobs, reduce crime or negotiate peace with armed rebels in poor states such as Chiapas, Guerrero and Oaxaca.

In the face of so many defeats at home, Fox has turned to foreign policy in the way one might expect a lame duck American president to do. The problem is, Fox has more than five years to go. Fox has said that he is president of 118 million people, 18 million of whom are living in the United States. Being a bold leader for these people may help get Bush votes and even encourage Mexican immigrants to wire home more money, but it won't solve the problems the other 100 million are suffering. ■

Martin Espinoza has written for Pacific News Service, the San Francisco Bay Guardian and CorpWatch. He spent the last three years in Guanajuato, Mexico, writing about Mexican politics and culture.

The Daughter's Generals

Bush's cronies are eager to
renew ties with the
Indonesian military

By Frida Berrigan

Things seemed to be looking up for Indonesia in July, when President Abdurrahman Wahid, widely viewed as corrupt and incompetent, finally was voted out of office—and Vice President Megawati Sukarnoputri assumed leadership. Megawati, the daughter of Indonesia's founding father, Sukarno, is seen by many as a clean break from the legacy of General Suharto, who ruled the vast archipelago with an iron fist for more than 30 years.

But to write a new chapter of Indonesian history, Megawati must first subordinate the powerful military to civilian control and resolve the conflicts in Aceh and Irian Jaya, where separatist movements have battled with Indonesian forces for decades. Claiming to assist this worthy task, the Pentagon, White House and a consortium of corporations want to renew weapons sales and military training.

Washington applauded Megawati's choice of a stable of advisers with close ties to international lending institutions and U.S. corporations. Finance Minister Boediono is the former director of the World Bank's Indonesia office and worked for Bank of America in Jakarta. Laksamana Sukardi, the new minister of state-owned enterprises, is a former Citibank executive. These choices demonstrate Megawati's commitment to creating a favorable climate for investment.

Throughout Indonesia, U.S. corporations doing business there benefit from a cowed and cheap work force, nonexistent labor and environmental

protections and generous tax breaks. But as she flings open the door to businesses, Megawati slams the door on negotiated solutions to the bloody conflicts in Aceh and Irian Jaya.

While Defense Minister Matori Abdul Djalil is a civilian, other military advisers include Lt. Gen. Agum Gumelar, whose ties to the notorious Kopassus counter-insurgency units are well known, and Lt. Gen. Hari Sabarno, who adamantly opposes autonomy in Aceh and Irian Jaya.

These two provinces are the sites of massive operations by oil giant ExxonMobil and mining company Freeport-McMoRan, respectively. ExxonMobil pays the Indonesian military millions of dollars to protect its oil fields and operations in Aceh, an arrangement that led to a recent

the ban in response to military and paramilitary violence after East Timor's vote for independence in 1999. Central to this legislation are criteria for the resumption of military ties, including the return of East Timorese refugees and prosecution of soldiers involved in human rights violations.

Two years after the violence, a newly independent East Timor is still struggling to recover, and Indonesia has failed to meet the congressional criteria. Violence in Aceh and Irian Jaya continues to escalate. Despite these grim realities, officials in Washington are bending over backward to re-engage with the military. Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld recently said he is "anxious to re-establish the military-to-military relationship with Indonesia."

While Bush himself is not well briefed on the region—his one remark on the conflict in East Timor during his campaign was an awkward reference to the "East Timorians"—his backers in the oil, gas and other industries are urging that the ban be lifted. The U.S.-ASEAN Business Council, a private body made up of the heads of corporations with interests in Southeast Asia—including ExxonMobil, Freeport-McMoRan, Boeing and Coca-Cola—released a report in February urging the new administration to "lift the embargo on military equipment and training

while re-establishing direct military-to-military contacts."

The Council on Foreign Relations also argues in a July report that the ban on military sales and training is "heavy-handed" and "short-sighted." Their report concludes that "the United States must cease hectoring Jakarta and re-engage Indonesia's army." Nearly one-third of the report's 27-member panel is made up of corporate representatives, including ExxonMobil and baked-goods giant Sara Lee, both of which have extensive investments in Indonesia.

Given the report's pro-weapons-sales position, it is not surprising that



Megawati greets East Timor independence leader Xanana Gusmão.

lawsuit by Acehnese villagers, who charge that soldiers on the company's payroll were responsible for rape, torture and murder.

Historically, the United States has consistently armed Indonesia's military with everything from F-16 fighter planes to M-16 combat rifles. Since Indonesia's invasion of East Timor in 1975, in which 200,000 people were killed, the United States has transferred more than \$1 billion in weaponry to Jakarta.

Congress stanching the flow of weapons following the 1991 Santa Cruz massacre in East Timor, where soldiers wielding M-16s mowed down 270 unarmed people. Congress strengthened

Dov Zakheim, a former Reagan official who just signed on as the comptroller in Bush's Pentagon, drafted the report. Between working for Reagan and Bush II, Zakheim was a lobbyist for weapons manufacturers like McDonnell Douglas (now part of Boeing), promoting arms sales to Saudi Arabia, Israel and elsewhere.

Despite the push coming from the Pentagon, White House and big business, many in Congress oppose re-establishing military ties. Most prominent among them is Sen. Tom Harkin (D-Iowa). He visited a church in East Timor just days before the 1999 vote, where hundreds sought refuge from the military violence. Everyone he met was later killed. In memory of that horror and because no one has been prosecuted for that crime, he pledges opposition to the resumption of military aid: "I'll do everything I can to stop it."

Frida Berrigan is a research associate with the Arms Trade Resource Center.

Klamath Water Babies

Anti-government farmers wouldn't have prospered without federal handouts

By Jeffrey St. Clair

KLAMATH, OREGON—Not since Shay's Rebellion has a popular uprising against the government enjoyed such jaunty press coverage. When a militant band of irrigators in the Klamath River basin of southern Oregon thumbed their noses at the Bureau of Reclamation and illegally diverted water into their fields of alfalfa, politicians such as Oregon Sen. Gordon Smith rushed to their side, calling them heroes.

Press accounts portrayed the irrigators as hard-scrabble farmers, versed in the values of Jefferson's agrarian democracy, defending their livelihood against an out-of-control federal government. Even Willie Nelson and his FarmAid organiza-

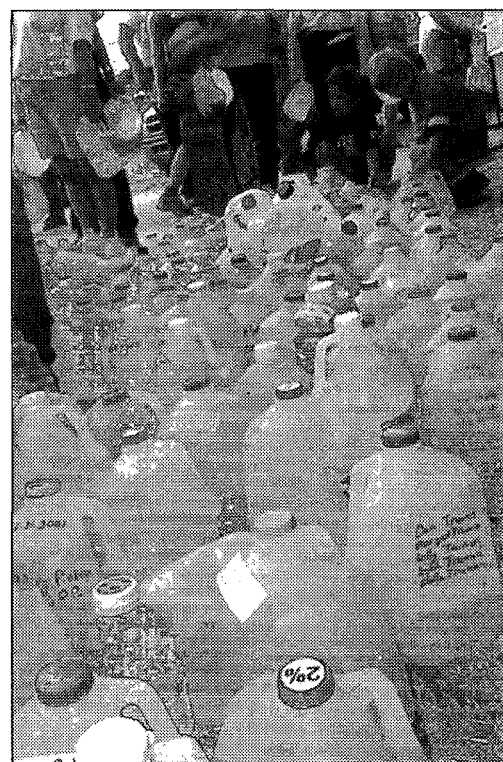
tion forwarded messages of solidarity. To top it off, there was near unanimous agreement that the proximate blame for the farmers' dire straits resided with the unfortunately named suckerfish.

The battle of the Klamath rests on a number of myths, perhaps none so frail as the supposed plight of the farmers themselves. It has been widely reported that the feds' decision to shut off irrigation water to the farmers put 1,400 farms in jeopardy. It should be remembered, however, that the irrigation district was heavily subsidized by the federal government, which not only footed most of the bills, but turned the Klamath National Wildlife Refuge into croplands for the farmers.

As much as the Klamath farmers decry the federal government, their farms exist almost solely because of generous federal handouts. Indeed, the dams, irrigation canals and headgates were all constructed with federal money, which they partially paid back by growing crops on federal land. "The debt the Klamath water users owed the United States came to about \$70 million for project construction with no interest," says Phil Doe, a former environmental compliance officer for the Bureau of Reclamation.

The Klamath refuge's once-extensive marshlands provide one of the most important bird habitats in the world. More than 2 million birds stop here to feed and rest during spring and fall migrations. Plus, more than 1,000 eagles, one of the densest populations in North America, roost here every year. Drained of water and parched by drought, those marshlands have now been transformed into a fissured bed of caked mud, with dust devils rising off land that should be the hunting ground of herons and osprey.

While the suckerfish, once a staple in the diet of the Klamath tribes, gets all the attention, the Klamath River also once boasted the most robust salmon fishery south of the Columbia River. No more. Dams, withdrawals for irrigation and toxic runoff from chemical agriculture have destroyed the fishery. The water in the once crystalline streams is now murky,



Supporters from across the country sent bottles of water to the Klamath farmers.

algae-clotted and emits a putrid odor.

The Klamath coho salmon has landed on the Endangered Species List, and the commercial salmon fishery has been put out of business largely by the upstream irrigators. "Those farmers are water robbers," says Tom Stockley, a former commercial salmon fisherman from Eureka, California. "Commercial fishermen have given up, given up, given up. I think it's time for someone else to give up something."

The salmon fishermen aren't the only locals who are unimpressed by the beligerence of the farmers. Bonanza, Oregon—a small town inside the basin itself—was once known for the purity of its water, which gushed forth from dozens of springs near town. Now the town's water supply is contaminated with toxins, algae and coliform bacteria. Residents must boil their drinking water and add bleach to their bathwater. The culprit: the Klamath farmers, whose toxic runoff has contaminated the town's wells and natural springs.

At the end of August, the town decided to sue the Klamath Basin Irrigation District. It wasn't an easy decision to make. Each time the problem was debat-

SUE HOUSE/KLAMATHBASINCRISIS.ORG

ed at City Council meetings, the Klamath farmers would show up en masse. "Whenever we have meetings, we get shouted down, overpowered," Former Bonanza City Councilman Bob Hoylman told the *Portland Oregonian*. Hoylman said that he finally resigned his position because of the rising tensions and death threats: "These people, they're out for blood."

Doe recalls urging his bosses at the Bureau of Reclamation to close the Klamath refuge to farmers more than a decade ago. "But no one wanted to do it," he says. "The payments for the leasing of wildlife refuge land were used to pay down the debt on the construction of the Klamath basin irrigation infrastructure—the same system that is destroying the refuge. Does it get any better than that? But now look at the ugly situation you've got: you're losing salmon, suckerfish, eagles, and you've poisoned the water quality in the entire basin. To those who argue that we need to help the Klamath irrigators out in their hour of need, maybe even buy them replacement land, I say, save it for those who really need it and deserve it." ■

Never Let Them See You Sweat

UNITE takes on the Wal-Marts of the world

By David Moberg

In an unprecedented international campaign to organize garment workers, unions in the United States, Asia and Central America are joining with student and religious groups to target the real powers in the global apparel business: big brand-name merchandisers like Eddie Bauer, Ann Taylor, Gap, J. Crew, Abercrombie & Fitch and the major retail chains.

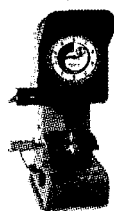
The clothing industry has changed dramatically in the past few decades: Roughly 30 major retailers now dominate the business, subcontracting work to thousands of workplaces employing 2 million people in 150 countries, whether in massive factories in China or Indonesia, highly mobile small workshops in Central America, or even

individual homework in the United States. "Retailers led by the Wal-Marts of the world determine the price, and the contractors have no choice," says new UNITE President Bruce Raynor, who is spearheading the global organizing drive. "It's their decision whether a product will be made in a sweatshop."

UNITE estimates that 80 percent of the workers producing clothing for U.S. retailers "are working under conditions that systematically violate local and international law." "Retailers know if a seam is one-eighth inch off, but they say they don't know it's made with child labor," Raynor says. "Bullshit. They know exactly what's going on, and we'll hold them accountable."

Beyond fashion and style, retailers increasingly are selling their brand image, and none of them wants its hipness compromised by association with child labor, prison labor, unsafe working conditions or sexual exploitation. The new retailer campaign, building on the anti-sweatshop efforts focused on individual companies like Nike, aims to tackle the entire industry.

Economist Robert Pollin estimates that only about \$55 of the \$1,831 spent



Appall-o-Meter

By Dave Mulcahey

Thin Blue Line 7.2

Two sheriff's deputies from rural Maryland are breaking new ground in the field of frivolous litigation. They're suing an innocent motorist they beat the hell out of three years ago.

Frederick T. Moore IV was driving erratically, Geov Parrish reports on *Workingforchange.com*, when a Frederick County patrol car picked up his trail. Moore failed at first to pull over. Then, when he did stop at a roadblock police had set for him, he failed to respond to their commands.

In short order, deputies Eric J. Winer and Jeffrey A. Norris had pepper-sprayed Moore, wailed on him with nightsticks and unleashed a dog into the cab of his pickup. Only then did they notice a sign dangling from Moore's rearview mirror identifying him as a diabetic. Moore, it turns out, had been on the verge of a diabetic coma.

No criminal charges were filed in connection with the case, but, after a four-day stay in the hospital, Moore filed a \$10 million lawsuit in federal court. Now Winer and Norris are a little hurt, frankly, by the way

Moore has been squalling to the press. After all, the lawmen claim in a suit filed in U.S. District Court, they saved him from "serious harm, injury and/or death." They're seeking \$68,000 in damages.

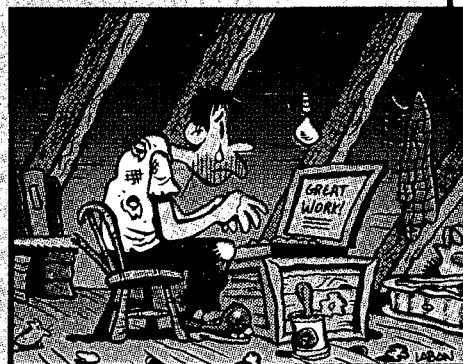
Grub Street Blues 4.9

Pity the poor scribblers. According to a report published by the National Writers Union, pay rates for freelance writers have declined by more than half since the '60s—and by as much as 80 percent at the top magazines. (Over the same period, by contrast, the average hourly wage in America has fallen a mere 20 percent in real terms.)

According to the report (which can be found at www.nwu.org), a freelancer can expect to churn out between 3,000 and 4,000 published words a month, the equivalent of two feature articles. Even a prolific writer, if paid 30 cents a word—the low end of the *New York Times* freelance scale, according to the NWU—could expect to make only \$14,400 a

year (even less if you take expenses into account). Of course, writers favored with the *Times*' high-end buck-a-word rate won't qualify for food stamps. They will, however, still fall short of the median income of full-time, college-educated workers in the United States.

So how do writers manage to cough up content, especially for alternative weeklies and, ahem, lefty magazines that offer a fraction of the aforementioned rates? Because rent's not so bad here in Bangladesh, actually, and because we love you.



TERRY LABAN

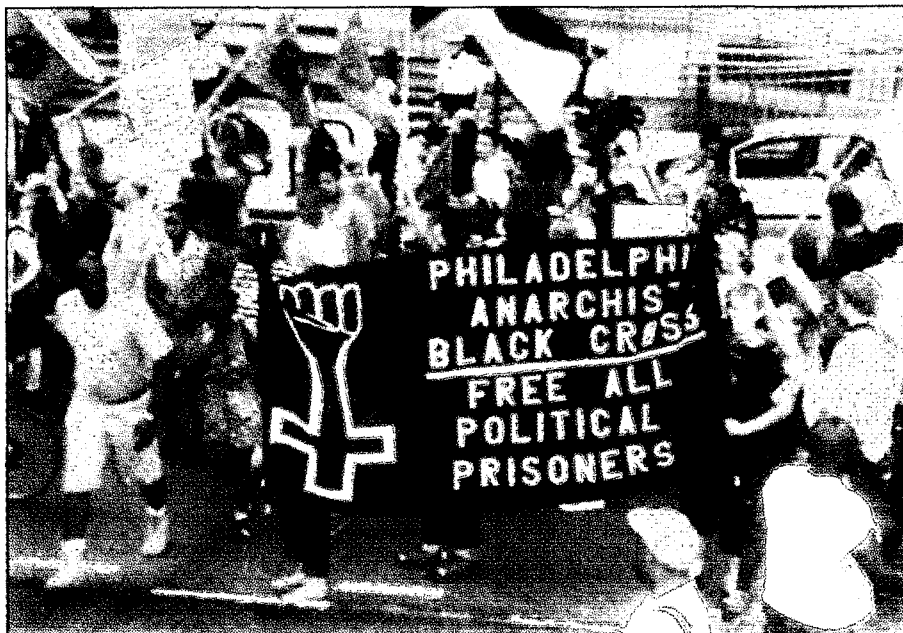
annually by the average American family on clothing actually goes to production workers. Quadrupling worker wages would cost each family of four a little over \$150. Surveys show that 85 percent of Americans say they would willingly pay more for clothes to make sure they weren't made under sweatshop conditions.

The UNITE campaign is starting with publicity and demonstrations aimed at roughly 10 companies, drawing on mobilization of campus and church supporters—especially a new Progressive Religious Partnership—as well as UNITE's own members. The field will be narrowed to one principal target for the all-important Christmas season, based on consultations with allies around the world and on how willing each company is to negotiate with UNITE and its partners. (At least one major retailer has already approached the union to discuss how to improve conditions in contractor factories and avoid being targeted.)

UNITE expects retailers to support a living wage, safe working conditions and the right of workers to organize a union. In July, for example, UNITE and other groups persuaded Liz Claiborne to issue a statement supporting the right to organize a union at two factories in Guatemala where pro-union workers had been physically attacked, forced to resign and threatened with death, apparently with the encouragement of the Korean contractors. After the statement, the union workers were able to return to their jobs.

UNITE also wants to persuade retailers to direct more of their domestic work to union shops. This would be a prelude to new organizing of domestic companies, but UNITE has no plans for a massive organizing drive targeting one company, as it did several years ago with GUESS—which promptly shifted most of its jeans production to Mexico as the union gained ground in its Los Angeles factories. Traditional organizing efforts don't "deal with the reality retailers have created," says UNITE organizing director Mark Fleishman, but if the new Global Justice for Garment Workers campaign is successful, "we'll organize here."

UNITE recognizes that such a campaign must deliver victories for its partners overseas, which now include



Marchers in Philadelphia protest the American Correctional Association.

unions or workers rights groups in Thailand, Guatemala, Nicaragua, Mexico, Dominican Republic, Hong Kong and Canada. Fleishman envisions unions in each of these countries increasingly coordinating work and sharing information in organizing drives, taking advantage of the leverage that UNITE can negotiate in advance with the major retailers through its campaign to pressure the industry.

Because the dynamics of the industry affect every company, UNITE hopes to change the rules of the business rather than try to find a few good companies and certify their behavior. It has criticized most of the efforts to set codes and invite monitors to inspect factories, arguing that ultimately workers organized in unions must be able to bargain with employers and enforce standards in their own workplaces.

Although raising standards overseas may help the apparel industry in the United States, "work isn't going to come back to the United States from Central America, Cambodia or China," acknowledges UNITE Vice President Susan Cowell. "The globalization of the industry is complete and irreversible. What is still to be determined is what the conditions are like everywhere, what regulatory apparatus, what rights, what rules of the game. Unless we change the rules, it will be bad for the industry everywhere." ■

Prison Profiteers

Philadelphia protesters challenge 'the hall of torture'

By Miranda Kennedy

PHILADELPHIA—The prison industry descended on the City of Brotherly Love in August for the American Correctional Association's 131st annual Congress of Corrections. The gathering at the Pennsylvania Convention Center featured an industry trade show with more than 600 booths—representing all facets of prisons, from wardens and weapons-makers to food services and HMOs. But the ACA also attracted activists from around the country who came to protest the "hall of torture."

While the ACA claims to care for prisoners and promote a balanced approach to criminal justice, protesters say it depends on corporations that exploit the expansion of the prison system. "These people can't present viable reforms," fumed April Rosenblum, a Philadelphia resident who came out to demonstrate. "They look at our families torn apart by addiction, our youth denied real resources and education—and what they see is money to be made off imprisoning us."

The prison industry is growing rapidly. According to The Sentencing Project,

although violent crime rates have dropped, the prison population has been doubling every 10 years. There are more than 2 million people now incarcerated in the United States; more than 275,000 are in private jails, and the capacity of private prisons in the United States is expected to double in the next three years. For-profit prison revenues passed the \$1 billion mark in 1998. According to the Bureau of Justice Statistics, federal prisoners accounted for 72 percent of the growth in private prison populations in 2000.

The ACA is the nation's leading inspector of prison facilities, and, increasingly, it is accrediting private institutions. Accreditation legitimizes corrections programs in the eyes of legislators and government officials and helps prison companies market their services.

The Corrections Corporation of America, the largest operator of privatized prisons in the country, boasts that almost 75 percent of its facilities are ACA-accredited. The CCA has 65 facilities in the United States and Puerto Rico and houses more than 55,000 inmates, which yielded them \$310 million in revenues in 1999.

Behind the display at the trade show, Brad Wiggins, senior director of customer relations for the CCA, emphasized that privatization has made the prison industry more cost-effective because it has created a climate of managed competition in the industry. CCA also says that privatizing prisons goes toward the greater good by helping to reduce the problem of overcrowded prisons and allowing funds to be allocated elsewhere.

But human rights groups question whether managed competition has compromised the national prison accreditation standard. A recent AFSCME report declared that for-profit prisons decrease quality of services and threaten public safety. A CCA facility in Youngstown, Ohio is now being shut down after two inmates were murdered as guards looked on, and 40 were assaulted by guards in 1998—the same year the ACA found the Youngstown facility to be in 100 percent compliance with all mandatory standards. And a 1994 Amnesty International investigation found that on Death Row at the ACA-accredited Oklahoma State Penitentiary, prison-

ers were locked down for 23 hours a day with no way of contacting guards in an emergency.

To get out their message that the ACA must be held accountable for human rights abuses in prisons they have accredited, the Coalition Against the ACA hosted a counter-conference and a series of demonstrations. Dubbing the ACA “the pinnacle of our social disease,” the group advocated community monitoring of prison conditions and focused on medical neglect in prison health systems and on phone companies’ price-gouging for prisoner calls. The Coalition’s week-long protests put the ACA on the defensive. “ACA does not support building bigger and bigger prisons,” read a statement from the organization. “No ACA policy or resolution supports ‘no frills’ prisons and jails.”

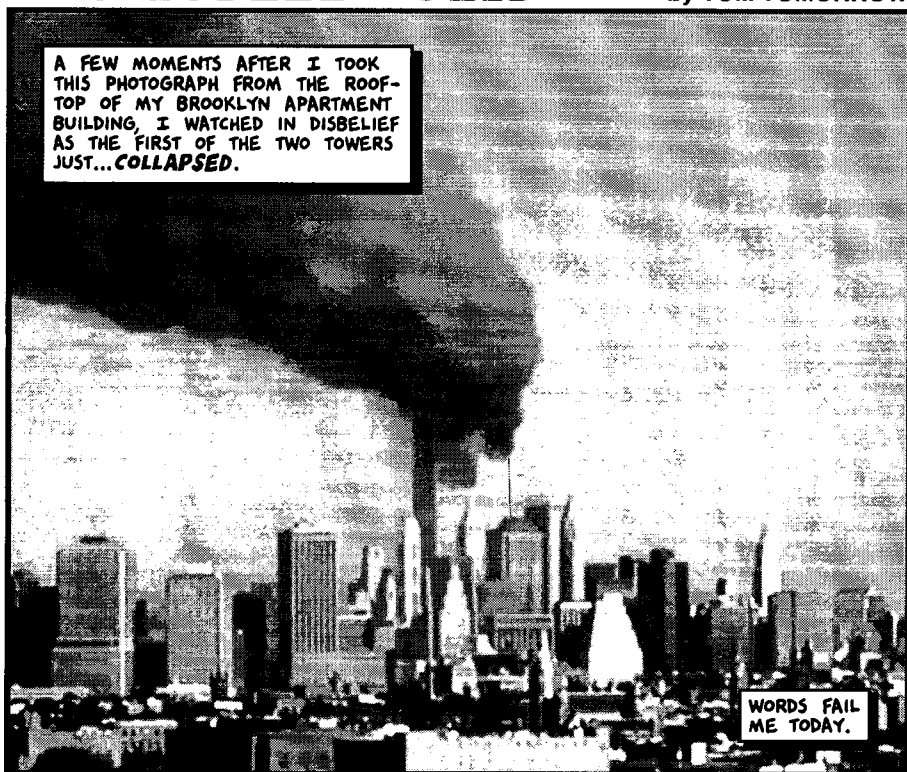
Abbott Laboratories, one of the regular attendees at the annual trade show, came under especially heavy criticism from protesters. Abbott manufactures sodium thiopental, a key ingredient in lethal injections. But after a group called Pennsylvania Abolitionists United Against the Death Penalty besieged Abbott with calls and e-mails warning them about the direct action campaign they had planned against them, Abbot stayed away.

Spurred by this victory, ex-inmates and allies from the Coalition disrupted the ACA’s closing plenary. Four protesters entered the meeting room and began shouting the coalition’s demands—which include reforming accreditation standards and incorporating prisoners into the ACA’s decision-making process. ACA officers responded by bizarrely breaking into patriotic song to try to drown them out. For nearly a half-hour, the room resounded with a chorus of “America the Beautiful” over screeches of “Cease accrediting super-max prisons and prisons that contain control units and insist that accredited prisons phase out existing control units!”

When the police came, they arrested the four activists, along with eight other bystanders and reporters. “It was a fine way to bid farewell to the American Correctional Association—from inside a Philly prison,” said one arrested demonstrator. “We fulfilled our mandate—we’ll see if they fulfill theirs.” ■

THIS MODERN WORLD

by TOM TOMORROW



9/11/01

WAR CRY

BLACK TUESDAY WHIPS UP A NATIONALIST FRENZY

By Doug Ireland

New York City is in a state of shock, mourning—and paranoia. Ordinary citizens are calling the police to report anything they think is suspicious, from a parcel to a person. Folks in the streets are sad and zombie-like. They stop and stare at the place where the vanished Twin Towers of the World Trade Center once rose above the skyline. Now all one sees are clouds of smoke.

The victims of large-scale terrorist attacks are always, for the most part, ordinary working people. That's true of those New Yorkers trapped in the WTC's collapse—they'll turn out to be secretaries, clerks, service personnel, salespeople, civil servants, middle-class managers. As one bleeding, soot-covered survivor told a reporter, "We are all just people trying to make a living." And then there is the staggering loss of life among the courageous rescuers—some 300 firemen missing and presumed dead, as well as at least 50 cops and apparently some of the contingent of volunteer rescuers from Local 40 of the Iron Workers Union. Innocents all.

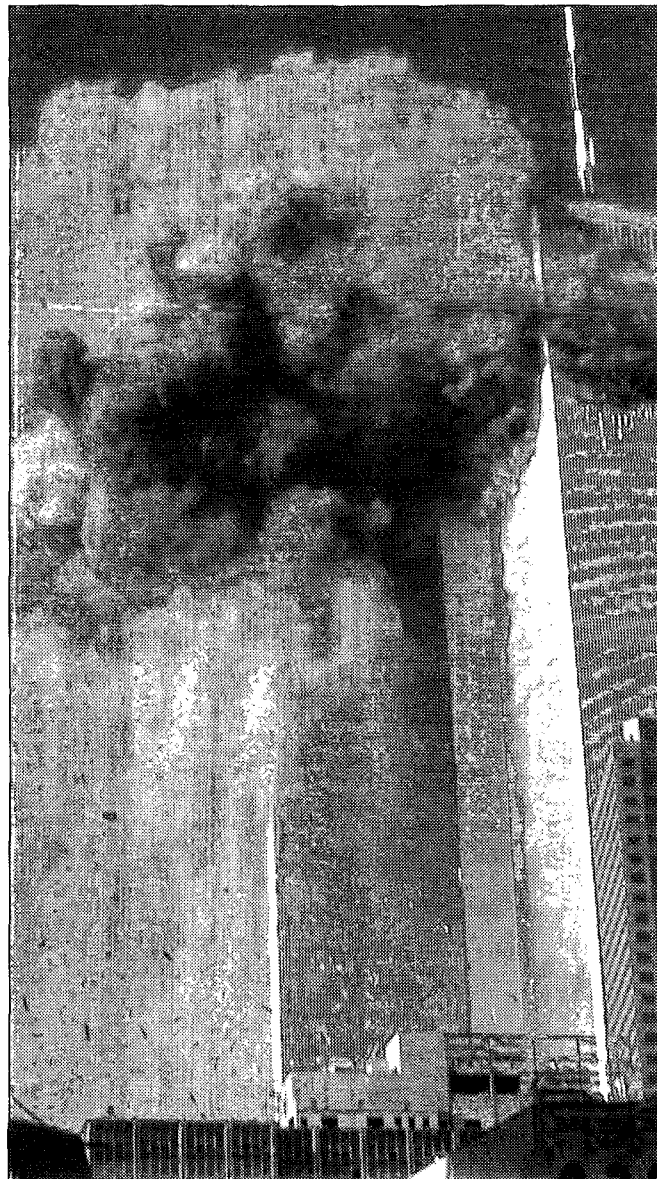
September 11 began here as an inordinately quiet Primary Day. Despite many close races—including the increasingly nasty contest to succeed Mayor Rudy Giuliani—when I cast my vote at 8 a.m. on that fateful Tuesday morning, turnout appeared rather light. I came home, had breakfast, perused the papers and prepared for a long election night. Around

9 a.m., I switched on New York 1, the all-local-news cable channel to check on turnout reports—only to find the WTC ablaze from the first attack.

As these words are written just 24 hours after the hideous attacks on the Twin Towers, September 11 has already been baptized—in the newest media cliché—The Day America Lost Its Innocence. America is still, in many ways, an isolationist country, navel-gazing and turned inward, its people woefully ignorant of what goes on outside its borders. Foreign affairs, except in times of crisis, always rank at the bottom of Americans' concerns, and most—even in these days of the Internet—have only the most inchoate and cartoon-like notion of peoples and cultures beyond the two oceans that, until now, have sheltered us. "Globalization" as a process has been the sophisticated preoccupation primarily of the corporate elites and the governing classes they own or rent; but for the great majority, "globalization" has been only a dimly understood catchword, its role in maintaining the world in wage-slavery and poverty ignored. And the reality of U.S. foreign policy's impact on other peoples seldom penetrates our collective consciousness.

Fortress America's complacency has now been shattered.

In the first day's wall-to-wall TV coverage of the attacks, beyond the tragic body count, two things emerged as the most discombobulating for many: the audacious way in which our own airliners were turned



TODD RENGEL/ANIMUSREX.COM (C) 2001

into weapons against us and the effrontery of the attack on the Pentagon, that votive temple of American might. In our entertainment society, the phrase most often heard from the lips of ordinary folks was that the attacks were "like a movie." (The most often cited: *Independence Day*—but one worries that it could become *The Siege*.) We're different from the rest of the world; it has been a century and a half since this kind of violence was felt here at home—and most people are ill-equipped to comprehend its origins.

All this explains why the inevitable result of Black Tuesday

will be to drive this increasingly conservative country—already living through what historian Blanche Wiesen Cook has labeled "the meanest moment" in the life of this republic—even further to the right. TV coverage is whipping up a nationalist, revanchist frenzy: An overnight CNN/Gallup poll showed that 86 percent of those surveyed considered the attacks "an act of war"—the same language we are told President Bush used to his cabinet when he finally got back to the White House. ("IT'S WAR!" screamed the next-day headline in the *Daily News*.)

9/11/01

NEW YORK'S STATE OF SHOCK

By Alisa Solomon

I emerged from the Chambers Street subway stop in Lower Manhattan at 9 a.m. into a crowd gaping up at the World Trade Center moments after its top floors had burst into flames. Some people were crying, a few women crossed themselves, but mostly people were exchanging stories in that almost affable New York-in-a-crisis way, collecting the tales that they would later tell their friends and maybe someday their grandchildren.

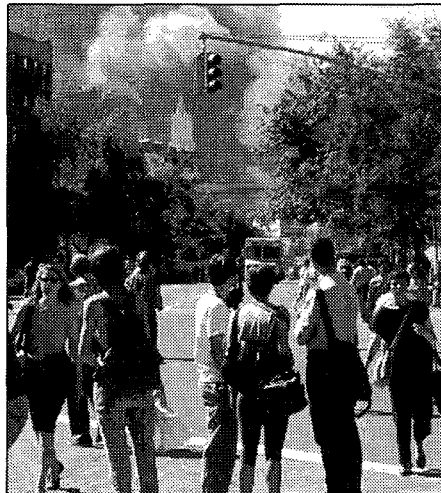
Until the second blast. As soon as we heard the muffled boom and saw flames kick along the walls of the tower, we knew in our bellies that America was changed forever. I wanted to throw up.

A panicky mob ran screaming up the street, some stopping two blocks north to gape some more. Theories started flying: "Terrorists," though few could say which kind for what cause. Sirens howled and quickly the streets became eerily empty of traffic. We could see some small figures—something orange, something flapping white—hanging off the building. Could they be people? The crowd let out a high-pitched primal squeal. I got the hell out of there.

I headed east in a nauseous daze—due for jury duty at state Supreme Court on Centre Street, propelled by one of those defense-mechanism impulses that makes you focus on the thing that is absolutely beside the point. I turned onto Duane Street, soon finding myself passing the Javits Federal Building. I started to run. It might blow any minute, I thought.

I spent much of August in Israel and the Occupied Territories. I was there during the weeks the Sbarro pizza restaurant in Jerusalem was blown up by a suicide bomber, and left Haifa only a day before the bombing at a restaurant there. Though I witnessed during my travels through the West Bank and Gaza how those areas

were the ones literally under siege, I began to understand the depth of Israeli fear. I lived in perpetual anxiety: sitting in a cafe, going to the grocery store, standing in any crowded area. Every time I boarded a bus, I felt my heartbeat speed up. I never felt so relieved to return home from abroad as I did two weeks ago. At last I could drop the guard, leave the panic behind.



Or so I thought. Jury duty was over: The court was closing. So I began the citizens' march up Centre Street, merging with the throngs sent home. Cops waved us away from subway entrances and told us to keep walking.

I fell in with a group of young women, administrative assistants at 2 World Trade Center. One was still crying. She was about to enter the World Trade Center when the first plane hit. "Arms, legs. Parts of people. They were falling on my head," she said.

Her friend put an arm around her, saying only "shhh," and the whole block went silent for a moment.

The third friend tried frantically to get a cellphone signal. A secretary to three vice presidents at a Wall Street firm that opens at 9, she typically starts work at 8:30. "I have to get their days prepared," she said, shaken yet proud, almost as if she expected to be there again tomorrow. "My subway was late today and for some reason, for once as the train slowed down and waited, I didn't get mad," she marveled.

Her calls wouldn't go through. Neither would anyone else's. Block-long lines formed at pay phones as WTC workers tried to contact loved ones to let them know they were OK.

As we trudged along—strangers talking like old friends, people who managed to find cabs and offering to share them—I flashed on the grammar-school drills I went through in the '60s. The Cold War came to my Midwestern suburban school in the form of duck-and-cover exercises and, once a year, a practice evacuation. We were let out of school early and had to walk all the way home, filing out in neat lines and heading into the streets, kids peeling off as we came to their neighborhoods.

A real war has come to these shores now, bringing massive violence into America for the first time. The terrible human casualties of today's attacks haven't even begun to be counted yet. Some of the intangible ones to come are obvious—the First Amendment, for starters. The altered city skyline is only the most visible manifestation of the size of the change.

I finally got my turn at the phone. There were three anxious messages on my answering machine: One from my partner. And two from friends in Israel. ■

This article originally appeared in The Village Voice.

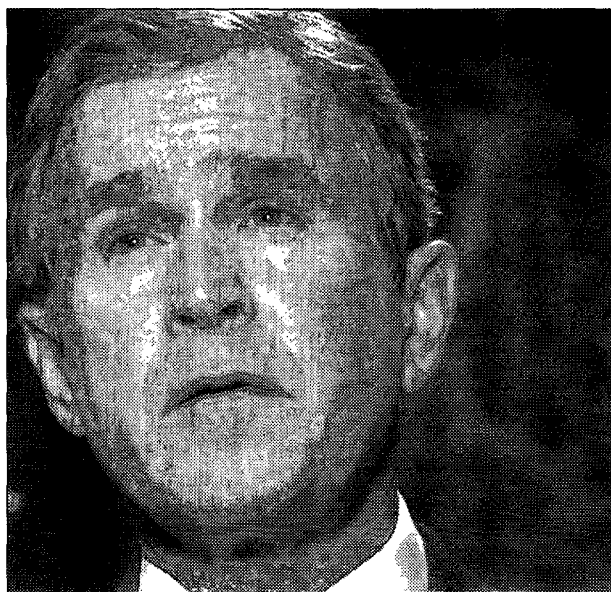
In its usual incautious rush to judgment, television and its often ill-informed chatterers have already identified the culprits: Muslims and Arabs in general, Osama bin Laden in particular. In the first 24 hours, we were told that bin Laden could have organized the attacks through Islamic fundamentalists recruited from Algeria and Morocco. But the blithering heads never put this into context: There was no mention of how the United States has supported the dictatorial military kleptocracy that rules Algeria, which has killed and imprisoned thousands of its own people and has encouraged fundamentalist terrorism to distract from its own corrupt economic mismanagement. (No mention either of the joint Algerian-American military maneuvers that have helped inflame popular sentiment in the Maghreb against Washington.)

Neither were viewers told of the long, despotic history of Morocco's monarchy—a major U.S. client regime—where, after a brief period of cosmetic democracy following the inauguration of the new, young King Mohammed VI, press censorship has been restored, newspapers critical of the royal police state suspended, and knocks on the door have resumed apace. In Afghanistan, the *mujahedin* we trained and supplied with weapons and money have morphed into the Taliban, bin Laden's somewhat reluctant hosts. (The Afghani leadership fears that if they give him up, they could be overthrown by their own supporters.)

Coupled with the oh-so-often repeated clip of Palestinians on the West Bank celebrating the attacks—the *schadenfreude* of the have-nots against the haves—these and many other omissions have helped to fan the flames of hate across the country. Racial profiling of Arabs has been commonplace, from police in the nation's capital to state troopers in New Jersey (already infamous for their frequent pullovers of blacks), who reportedly arrested five Arab-looking men driving an explosives-filled van headed to blow up the George Washington Bridge. (This widely broadcast “news” proved false: There were no explosives in the van.)

CNN repeatedly stubbed its foot on the truth throughout the first day, as when Judy Woodruff reported that the United States had started bombing Kabul (it turned out that the small-scale rocket attack was the work of the anti-Taliban Northern Alliance). Woodruff verged close to on-air hysteria—when reporting a rumor that the hijacked plane which crashed in Pennsylvania had been headed to attack Camp David, she blubbered that “this is the sort of report that makes you re-evaluate everything.”

Meanwhile, death threats against Muslim community institutions poured in. Shots were fired at a mosque and its school in Texas, and a mosque was firebombed in Michigan. The bashing of American Muslims, widespread after Islamic fundamentalists were initially (and erroneously) blamed for the Oklahoma City bombing, has already begun.



PAUL BUCK/AFP

Yet the parade of Bush administration leaders who showed up before the cameras throughout the first day uttered not a single appeal for calm and abstention from guilt by ethnicity. Particularly notable in his silence on this issue was Attorney General John Ashcroft, the constitutionally mandated guardian of our civil liberties (itself a disquieting thought—Ashcroft is a religious zealot nearly as mad as the Taliban). Not until 1 a.m. on Wednesday did I hear a network news anchor (Peter Jennings) make the common-sense observation that “entire communities should not be held responsible for the acts of a few individuals.” And not surprisingly, verbal Arab-bashing was most in evidence on Rupert Murdoch's Fox Network.

The president's nationally televised mini-address on Tuesday night—the most truncated on record—contained no thought for the 4 million Arab-Americans (half of whom, by the way, are Christians) who with each hour that passes increasingly are being made to feel like suspects. Dubya's public performance on the first day was a study in contrasts. In his initial morning appearance from Florida, he appeared like a nervous little rabbit. (Dick Cheney was running the government from the bunkered Situation Room in the White House basement—even Democrats must have been praying that his stents didn't pop.) By the time of his Oval Office speech that

night, Dubya's handlers had him under control: They crafted a short discourse—full of short words—so he wouldn't blunder over his tongue. And while it avoided the sort of soaring alliterations Bush has difficulty pronouncing, it was, technically speaking, a flawless nationalist rallying cry delivered by a leader who appeared strong and vengeful. Just what the image-makers ordered.

Shortly before Bush's speech, ABC's national security correspondent John McWethy—nicknamed “Colonel” by his colleagues for his muscular military affinities—was reporting, “They're ready to go to war. It's an atmosphere of war here at the Pentagon,” whose collapsed section was still burning from the attack. The next day, the bloodlust for revenge had begun to spew from the mouths of senior politicians. The GOP's Arlen Specter and the Democrat Robert Torricelli both called for a Declaration of War by Congress.

But against whom? Fill in the blank.

The coming weeks are fraught with many perils. With Bush needing to prove himself a strong leader in combat and thus ensure his re-election, there is the probability of precipitous military action. (Former National Security Council staffer Gary Sick, now head of Columbia University's Middle East Institute, and Milt Bearden, the CIA's former man in Afghanistan, both have warned that the attacks appear to have been beyond bin Laden's capacities. And, as Sick pointed out, “intelligence is only as useful as those who evaluate

it.") Bush needs to impose a body count on *somebody* to show what he's made of, and it seems to matter little whether those against whom we will inevitably riposte are actually the people who carried out the attacks. That's the implication of the overnight *Washington Post* poll showing that 84 percent of Americans want military action against any nation that "harbors or shelters" the terrorists (terms susceptible of an unsettlingly fluid definition).

Bush's Oval Office speech claimed the attacks were visited on America "because we're the brightest beacon for freedom and opportunity in the world." That, of course, was a lie. However appallingly misguided and criminal the attacks were, they were surely fueled by seething rage at a long list of depredations over many decades—the support of despots, oligarchs and sanguineous dictators not only during the Cold War, but since; and the exploitation of the impoverished.

A formal Declaration of War undoubtedly would be popular in this country, but it is fraught with domestic dangers: It would give the executive branch enormous latitude in speeding up the drive toward a garrison state on which Bush—with no visible dissent as yet from any Democrat—seems bent. Any attempt to block Bush's \$18.5 billion raid on Social Security revenues to finance the Pentagon buildup?

Fugeddaboutit—those numbers will only go up. In the wake of the attacks, Kent Conrad, the Senate Budget Committee's Democratic chairman, has already declared defense spending "our core priority." And voices in Congress are calling for giving intelligence agencies more domestic authority. (Bill Clinton's 1996 Anti-Terrorism Act contains many suspensions of civil liberties protections in terrorist investigations, but more will now be proposed.) Moreover, the Democrats' chances of holding on to their one-vote Senate majority or retaking the House, slim before the attacks, will be next to nil. (And whenever the New York mayoral primary is rescheduled, Freddy Ferrer might as well stay home. In the new wave of law-and-order sentiment, he'll be toast.)

Here in Lower Manhattan, long lines of refrigerator trucks are pulling up outside the city's overburdened morgue to receive the thousands of corpses yet to be unearthed. The smoke and stench from the rubble of the Twin Towers is still seeping through the window of my apartment. CNN's Bill Schneider just announced a new poll showing three-quarters of Americans believe that "like Pearl Harbor and the JFK assassination, the events of the last 24 hours will change America forever."

Not for the better, I greatly fear. For, as the poet said, when the flag is unfurled, all reason is in the trumpet. ■

9/11/01

THE END OF ISOLATION

By Geov Parrish

In the wake of an event unprecedented in world—let alone U.S.—history, comparisons to Pearl Harbor have been flying. There are any number of ways this is a misleading image, but in one important respect it's utterly wrong.

By December 6, 1941, a war had been raging against fascism in Europe for two years, and the United States had stood aside. It had done so because of powerful domestic political forces urging isolationism—arguing that the war in Europe was none of America's business, that we were best off tending solely to our own affairs. That attitude ended instantly and permanently (sorry, Pat Buchanan) with Pearl Harbor.

Today, the U.S. government and military is the extreme opposite of isolationist. They have their fingers in just about every pie in the world. What hopefully stopped on September 11 was not our economic, military or political isolationism; it was the willful cultural isolationism of the American people.



Comparisons to Pearl Harbor are misleading.

While the U.S. government, corporations and the military pursue extremely active (and often destructive) policies, many of us back here in The Great Mall have chosen to remain willfully oblivious. We follow the pennant races, we clip coupons and go shopping, we obsess about our jobs, we tend to our families and communities.

But we ignore the rest of the world. Most of us speak no foreign languages, and many of us couldn't find Afghanistan on a map. We trust implicitly—whether consciously or by our own lack of concern—that our economic, military and political leaders are acting in our best interests and on behalf of democracy and freedom. We know that the world buys our brand names, and we are secure. Now the grimmer realities of the rest of the world have come home with a sickening jolt.

With luck, one positive thing that might emerge from this horror is the end of America's cultural isolationism. It's a goal we should all encourage, not only to improve our understanding of and accountability to the rest of the world, but to improve our policy-makers' accountability to us.

If our citizens paid closer attention to what the people acting in our names around the globe were actually doing, they might demand policies more in line with our professed ideals of democracy and freedom. Ultimately, that's the best protection against global terrorism. ■

9/11/01

SO THIS IS WAR?

By Christopher Hitchens

In the post-World Trade Center era, the question “how” is still taking precedence over the question “why.”

At the presidential level, the two questions appear to be either crudely synthesized or plain confused, since George W. Bush has taken to describing the mass murder in New York and Washington as “not just an act of terrorism but an act of war.” This strongly implies that he knows who is responsible; an assumption for which he doesn’t care to make known the evidence.

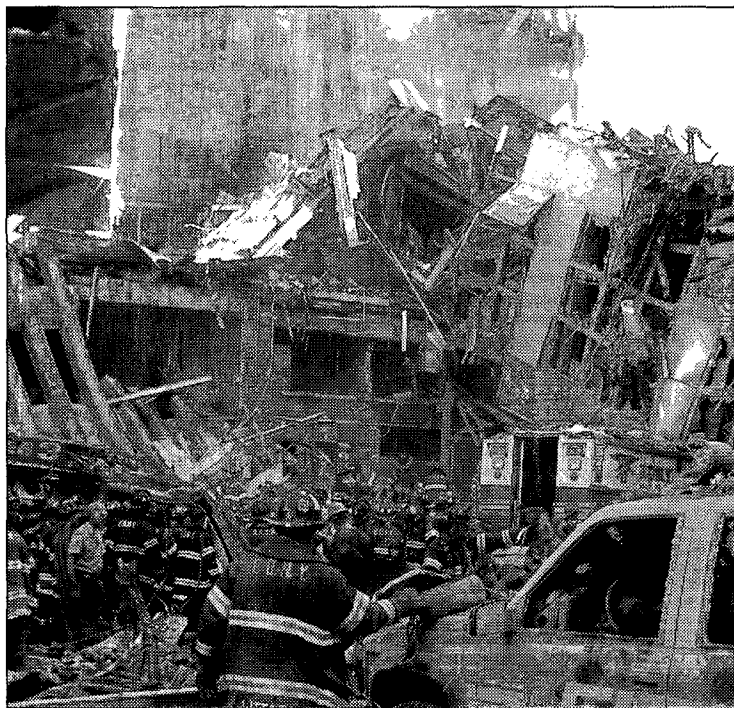
Instant opinion polls show the same cognitive dissonance at the mass level. Most people, when asked if they agree with the president about the “war”

proposition, reply in the affirmative. But in follow-up questions, they counsel extreme caution about retaliation “until all the facts are in.” This means, in ordinary words, that they have not the least idea whether they are at war or not.

Over the years since the seizure of the American Embassy in Tehran in 1979, the public has become tolerably familiar with the idea that there are Middle Easterners of various shades and stripes who do not like them. The milestones of this—the Marine barracks in Beirut, the Gulf War, the destruction of Pan Am Flight 101—actually include a previous attack on the World Trade Center in 1993. And on that occasion, the men convicted of the assault turned out to have backgrounds in a Western-sponsored guerrilla war—actually a *jihad*—in Afghanistan.

Osama bin Laden had pretty good name-recognition among American news consumers even before Tuesday’s trauma. He has already survived a cruise-missile attack ordered by President Clinton in 1998 (in the same cycle of attacks that destroyed a Sudanese aspirin factory in the supposed guise of a nerve-gas facility). Bin Laden is perhaps unlikely to die in his bed, but his repeated identification as a “Saudi millionaire”—we thought the Saudi Arabians were on our side—makes consistency in demonization rather difficult; the image somehow doesn’t compute.

There have been cases of random violence here against Arab-owned shops, but, on the whole, it has been remarkable to see how such crude response has been kept to a minimum.



EMANUEL DUMONT/REUTERS

The television repeatedly shows film of Palestinian youths applauding the attacks in New York, but instantly “balances” it with a calm and reasoned appeal from the telegenic Dr. Hanan Ashrawi. Mayor Rudolph Giuliani’s Tuesday evening press conference in Manhattan—one of his very best and almost the first occasion on which any hard information was provided to the public—was notable in the same way. He tersely promised extra police protection to Arab and Muslim citizens, and dismissed any thought of vigilantism.

It probably seems indecent to most people to ask if the United States has

ever done anything to attract such awful hatred. Indeed, the very thought, for the present, is taboo. Some senators and congressmen have spoken of the loathing felt by certain unnamed and sinister elements for the freedom and prosperity of America, as if it were only natural that such a happy and successful country should inspire envy and jealousy. But that is the limit of permissible thought.

In general, the motive of the perpetrators is shrouded by rhetoric about their “cowardice” and their “shadowy” character, almost as if they had not volunteered to immolate themselves in the broadest of broad-blue daylight. On the New York campus where I am writing this, there are a few students and professors willing to venture points about U.S. foreign policy. But they do so very guardedly, and it would sound like profane apologetics if transmitted live. So the analytical moment, if there is to be one, has been indefinitely postponed.

In any case, the question of “how” is for the moment the more riveting one. Did the murderers have accomplices within the airport security systems? Have there been “sleepers” here for years? How did the coordination work? How near did we come to losing the White House? And—more nerve-rackingly—has all the venomous energy been spent in this one climactic assault?

During the Cold War, it was often said that the United States faced an unsleeping foe that was “godless.” I don’t think it’s sufficiently recognized how important this one word was, and how much it is missed. The holy warriors, as these seem

to be, are an entirely different proposition. The United States as a country has no fixed position on Islamic fundamentalism. It has used it as an ally, as well as discovered it as an enemy. It could not bomb Saudi Arabia or the United Arab Emirates, even if it found conclusive proof that the hijackers and assassins had actually trained there. So what does the president mean when he says so portentously that "we will make no distinction between the terrorists who committed these acts and those who harbor them"? It looks like a distinction without a difference, and gives a momentary impression of being decisive, while actually only confusing the issue.

As I write, fighter planes are the only craft in the sky over New York and Washington, and indeed, the rest of the country. The National Guard is on the streets. The Atlantic and

Pacific coasts are being ostentatiously patrolled by large and reassuring Navy vessels. Not only does this deployment do absolutely no good today (it has about the same effect as the newly imposed ban on curbside baggage check-in at airports), but it would have made absolutely no difference if it had started before the attacks.

Yes, it does give the impression that we are "at war," all right. But being on maneuvers is not the same as warfare, and "preparedness" and "vigilance" are of little value if they contribute to the erection of a Maginot Line in the mind. ■

Christopher Hitchens is a columnist for *Vanity Fair* and *The Nation* and a professor at New School University in New York. This article originally appeared in London's *Guardian* newspaper.

9/11/01

A TINDERBOX IN PALESTINE

By Charmaine Seitz

JERUSALEM

Palestinians in the West Bank and Gaza Strip experienced a tinderbox of emotions as the series of hijackings and attacks struck America. Initially, some Palestinians cheered at the strike. Those images were caught on television and broadcast around the world.

But most Palestinians watched the unfolding events in horrified silence. Streets were empty as the sun set in Jerusalem. Some tried desperately to call their families in the United States, afraid of the mass anti-Arab hysteria they felt was overcoming the nation—or afraid that their relatives might no longer be alive.

"Palestinians are like any other people under the sun," said Mahdi Abdul Hadi, 45, lighting a candle with other Palestinians in front of the American consulate. "Despite the current environment between Washington, Tel Aviv and Gaza, people are really seriously shocked to see such a catastrophe. Faceless, nameless people are hurt and no one can explain that kind of anger and frustration."

Others said they prayed that the perpetrators would not turn out to be Arab. Minutes into the attack, international news agencies were reporting that a leftist Palestinian faction, the Democratic Front for the Liberation of Palestine, had claimed responsibility. A Palestinian reporter moaned when he saw the newscast, saying, "Oh, God. Leave us alone. Don't we have enough problems?"

Local DFLP officials were brought in front of the cameras to deny the accusation, and analysts expressed doubt that the small group had the capacity, money or will to create such devastation. "That is impos-

sible," Palestinian cabinet secretary Ahmad Abdel Rahman said unequivocally when asked if Palestinians might be involved. "No Palestinian could think this way. It is not the Palestinian way to do anything this way. It is too crazy, too stupid, too blind."

Indeed, Palestinian leader Yasser Arafat was among the first world leaders to publicly condemn the many deaths and express his condolences for the loss of life. Denials of responsibility followed quickly from both Hamas and Islamic Jihad, organizations that have used suicide attacks against Israelis in their strategy of fighting the Israeli occupation.

So why then, were Palestinians pictured celebrating in Jerusalem, in Nablus and in the Palestinian refugee camps in Lebanon? "After the 1967 aggression against the Arabs, the American people in 17 major cities took to the streets, celebrating Israel's victory," remembers Faisal Abu Kishlik, a man in his fifties.

That war was when Israel occupied the West Bank and Gaza Strip, defeating the Arabs and taking the land that Palestinians now seek as their state. It was the second time that Palestinians had been made refugees by Israel and it was the second, but not the last, time that the United States sided with Israel over the Palestinian population.

"It is time for the American people to see that we are under occupation here in Palestine and what we need is to live in peace and to have our own state," says Kishlik, a graduate of City College in New York. "We want to remind the American people that what they suffered yesterday, we suffer daily.

American warplanes and American missiles are used on [Palestinian] police stations and schools and civilians. We appeal to the American people to do something about it."

And while the vast majority of Palestinians resent U.S. support of Israel, none are celebrating the damage caused by not-yet-proven allegations that this attack was crafted by Arab hands. Local Palestinian media reported a slew of death threats and angry letters sent from abroad via e-mail. The Palestinian Authority spent much of Wednesday doing damage control, repeatedly condemning the attacks and offering help in finding the perpetrators.

In a press release sent out that day, the Palestinian leadership said it was alarmed at the "almost overt jubilation of some Israeli politicians and official figures at what they consider a vindication of their stand," i.e., that Israeli efforts to squelch the Palestinian uprising are part of the fight against terrorism. Former Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Barak could be heard on several television channels asking Americans to work with Israel in the fight against terror.

Under cover of the media focus on New York and Washington, Israeli forces entered the West Bank town of Jenin on Tuesday evening. Battles between Palestinian fighters and Israeli tanks, F-16 warplanes and paratroopers had left some 12 Palestinians dead, including a 9-year-old girl. Israeli officials said the invasion was necessary to clear out the "nest of terrorists" in the town after a Palestinian man with Israeli citizenship allegedly trained in Jenin blew up himself and three Israelis in the Israeli town of Nahariyya.

Perhaps the most strident Palestinian emotion was that of fear and uncertainty. "The world is totally different than yesterday," Abdel Hadi says. "We don't trust anyone anymore. We don't believe in anyone anymore. And one is even doubtful of oneself." ■

9/11/01

WHY WASN'T BUSH WARNED? U.S. INTELLIGENCE HAS A LOT TO ANSWER FOR

By Wayne Madsen

Now that fingers are pointing to Osama bin Laden as the prime suspect behind the hijacked plane attacks against the World Trade Center and the Pentagon, informed sources are wondering why more wasn't done to rein in bin Laden or infiltrate his inner circle.

As *In These Times* went to press, numerous scenarios were suggested for how the attacks had been planned and carried out. Sources close to the Lebanese Hezbollah and the London-based al-Muhajiroun Islamic movement say the terrorist attacks on New York and Washington were possibly aided by members of Iraqi intelligence. Al-Muhajiroun is headed by Syrian-born Sheik Omar Bakri, who, while not an associate of bin Laden, has supported his cause with rhetorical denunciations of the West in general and the United States in particular. The Iraqi pilot scenario might explain how the commercial pilots of American and United airlines flights were so easily replaced by terrorist pilots.

Another source familiar with bin Laden's al-Qaeda network suggested some of the pilots may have been veteran Mirage and Mig pilots of the Iraqi Air Force who could easily have been trained to understand the cockpit instrumentation of Boeing 757s and 767s in order to vector their kamikazes into their targets.

Yet another scenario—backed by information from sources knowledgeable about al-Qaeda—is that the terrorist pilots were trained by bin Laden within Afghanistan. A Federal Aviation Administration source, speaking on conditions of anonymity, claimed a likely scenario was that the some of the terrorists cleared security at overseas airports and then transferred to the domestic flights upon their arrival in the United States.

In what may be the worst case of "what goes around, comes around,"

an Iranian source has reported that the 20 terrorists may have been given phony passports by officials of Pakistan's Inter-Services Intelligence (ISI)—the top intelligence agency in the country. The passports were supposedly used by the terrorists to transit through Europe and to eventually enter the United States. It was the ISI, during the '80s, that funneled CIA weapons and

money to the *mujahedin* forces in Afghanistan. If it is true that the terrorists were aided by Pakistani government officials, Islamabad may join Kabul as a target for American military retaliation.

Bin Laden's fingerprints on the attack may also have a historical precedent. In 1995, the laptop computer of Ramzi Yousef, a bin Laden associate, was confiscated in the Philippines. Police discovered that Yousef planned to hijack 11 inbound U.S. commercial aircraft taking off from Asia. The plan then may have been to blow them up in mid-air or crash them into targets in the United States.



"Overblown threat" or mastermind?

**Officials who have had close
contact with the Taliban should
be asked by Congress about
their relationships with bin
Laden's protectors.**

Bush administration wasn't alerted to an impending attack through Taliban back-channels. According to sources close to the Taliban and Pakistan's Jamiaat-i-Islami Party—the Pakistani fundamentalist movement that nurtured and trained the Taliban—a senior Jamiaat official, Qazi Husein Ahmad, recently traveled to both London and Washington. While in

Washington, he reportedly re-established ties with the Taliban's old CIA contacts from the Reagan and first Bush administrations.

Ahmad is the second Islamist radical to have been welcomed by Langley in recent months. No sooner had the Bush administration taken over than the Taliban's ambassador-at-large, Rahmatullah Hashami, sat down with senior CIA, State and Pentagon officials

in a meeting arranged by Laili Helms, the Taliban's unofficial representative in the United States and niece-in-law of Richard Helms, former CIA director and U.S. ambassador to Iran.

According to Pakistani sources, the Taliban and the Pakistani veterans of the CIA-led *mujahedin* war against the Soviets had been keen to rekindle old ties with the former South Asia CIA chief Richard Armitage, now Secretary of State Colin Powell's deputy, and Christina Rocca, assistant secretary of state for South Asia, who is a 15-year veteran of the CIA's Operations Directorate, a position where she also interfaced with the Islamist guerrillas. Rocca had previously met in Islamabad with Mullah Abdul Salam Zaeef, the Taliban ambassador to Pakistan, and his assistant, Sohail Shaheen. Armitage, however, is considered anti-Taliban because he favors restoring the elderly ousted Afghan monarch, King Zahir Shah, to power.

Powell was reportedly upset about the re-establishment of ties with the Taliban and Pakistani Islamists, but has apparently been overruled by the dominant CIA interests in the administration. Intelligence sources point out that, for its part, the CIA wanted to re-establish contact with murky *ex-mujahedin* and Taliban-allied arms- and drug-smuggling fronts in Rawalpindi and Peshawar. According to one senior U.S. government source, the Taliban's greatest cheerleaders are the CIA and the State Department's Bureau of Intelligence and Research. The source said the CIA had always argued that bin Laden was "overblown" as a threat.

The United States has recently tilted toward the Taliban and against the anti-Taliban Northern Alliance of Gen. Ahmed Shah Massoud. The Defense Department largely supports Massoud, but the CIA and State Department argue that

supporting the general would put the United States on the same side as Russia and Iran—his two major backers.

Massoud was the target of a suicide bomb assassination attempt by two bin Laden allies disguised as television journalists the day before the attack on the United States. (At press time, there were conflicting reports as to whether he was dead or alive.) But that did not stop Massoud's forces from launching a missile attack on Kabul Airport the night of September 11—to the delight of many Americans, many of whom were surprised it was not a U.S. military attack.

After the recovery and mourning period, Washington will go into its traditional finger-pointing mode. Then, the CIA and other Bush administration officials who have had close contact with the Taliban should be asked by Congress about the nature of their relationships with the protectors of bin Laden. For starters, CIA Director George Tenet should be asked what the United States received in return for even talking to the brutal mullahs who run Kabul. The State Department should be questioned as to why it has banned Massoud's movement from occupying the vacant Afghan Embassy in Washington even though it is recognized by the United Nations as the legitimate government of Afghanistan.

At the very least, the American people deserve to know why the Bush administration, through its words and actions, has given tacit support to a government that has provided safe haven to the man who may be the worst mass murderer of American civilians in the nation's history. ■

Wayne Madsen is an investigative journalist based in Washington and the author of *Genocide and Covert Operations in Africa*.

9/11/01

IN PURSUIT OF JUSTICE

THE RATIONAL RESPONSE TO TERROR

By David Moberg

The heinous criminal attacks on the World Trade Center in New York and the Pentagon in Washington highlight in a most grisly way the possibilities—and the limits—of violence in contemporary life. The assaults opened up a new tactic that will almost certainly be copied by others, turning every commercial plane into a potential weapon of mass destruction. They escalate both the scale of terrorism, making dreaded scenarios of nuclear bombs in a suitcase or chemical and biological warfare attacks seem more plausible, and the long-term global trend toward making civilians targets in conflicts. Those prospects, just as much as human sympathy, may have led to the nearly unanimous condemnation of the acts by government leaders around the world and unprecedented support from both the United Nations and NATO.

But the attack's evocation of Pearl Harbor to many Americans also underscores how different this event is from

the triggering of the U.S. entry into World War II. The scale of carnage may warrant calling it war, but it is quite obviously not an invasion by a nation bent on conquest or war by any conventional definition. Indeed, although early information indicates a connection of the hijackers to the Middle East, it is not at all clear who was responsible, let alone the implication of any state in the devastation.

Labeling the acts as war risks leading the United States into a strategy that may only enlarge the catastrophe. Just as the attack demonstrated the vulnerability of the world's only superpower, the response needs to recognize the limits of force and violence as a solution. Rabid hawks—like Pennsylvania Republican Sen. Rick Santorum, who called for vengeance not justice, and conservative leader William Bennett, who called for a bloody war against "radical Islam"—represent the kind of shoot-first, think-later (if ever) response that is likely to lead to more terrorist attacks

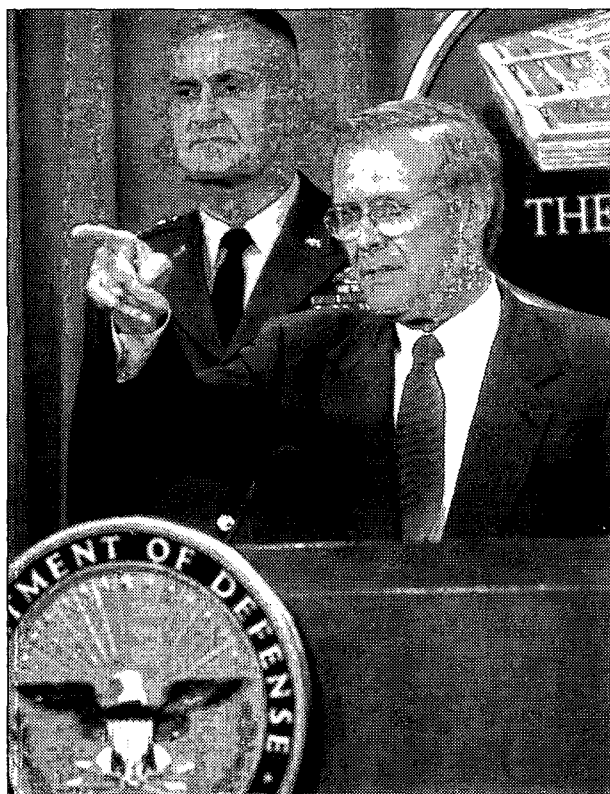
on the United States and the massacre of civilians elsewhere in the world.

What kind of response is appropriate legally, politically and strategically? The goals should be to bring those responsible to justice and to prevent future acts of terrorist violence—set within the larger context of pursuing international peace. The methods for doing so are primarily political and diplomatic, even if some targeted use of force may be both legitimate and effective. It is important for the United States, which has a long and sorry history of both tolerating terrorists acting in our supposed national interests (such as contras in Nicaragua or the current paramilitaries in Colombia) and attacking civilian targets (from Hiroshima to Vietnam), to break out of the cycle of violence in this instance and set

an example that we would want other governments to follow. This is not because the United States has lost legitimacy to act because of any past misdeeds. Important as it is to understand how this country has fueled violence around the world (and not only by being its largest arms dealer), nothing the United States has done justifies the attacks made on the World Trade Center.

But the attacks set off a stampede of politicians calling for immediate increases in U.S. military spending, but buying more fighters or building a National Missile Defense system would do nothing to advance the country's legitimate goals. If it's unclear whether Star Wars would be able to stop any missiles, it's unquestionable that it will do nothing to prevent attacks like those against the Pentagon and World Trade Center. Spending the \$8.3 billion Bush is requesting for missile defense on economic development in the Middle East would do far more for national security.

Under the U.N. charter, nations may legally engage in violence only through the Security Council or in self-defense, not for reprisals or pre-emptive attacks. Setting aside for a moment the question of Security Council action, there is a plausible—if legally disputable—case the United States might make for attacks on terrorist groups or even a nation supporting them, according to Doug Cassel, director of the Center for International Human Rights at Northwestern University. For example, if the attacks are



"It's war," says the Pentagon.

Massive military attacks on a wide variety of targets are unlikely to have much impact on any dispersed terrorist operations.

through some massive display of force. But there are many reasons why it should adopt a multi-layered strategy that uses force selectively.

Massive military attacks on a wide variety of targets are unlikely to have much impact on any dispersed terrorist operations, or even many governments that might be targeted. As a *New York Times* correspondent in Afghanistan noted, it would be difficult to bomb that devastated country

"back to the stone age," since it is there already. And as a former CIA operative noted, Clinton administration cruise missile attacks on al-Qaeda camps bounced some rubble around in the mountains of Afghanistan without affecting terrorist capabilities.

If bin Laden really is the mastermind, then the most devastating attack on the world's greatest power was launched from what is probably the world's poorest and most backward nation. That alone should suggest that conventional notions of warfare simply aren't going to work in this case, unless the United States intends large-scale ground invasions and long-term occupations of most of the Middle East, which could lead to World War III.

At the moment, the United States is in the rare position of having worldwide public sympathy and at least nominal support for suppressing terrorism. If it abuses the legitimacy of its moral high ground, then it will lose the political support that may be the most effective means of both bringing the guilty to justice and controlling terrorism. Massive attacks—let alone such mindless strategies as a war against "radical

linked to Osama bin Laden's al-Qaeda group, then the United States could argue that counter-strikes are part of self-defense against an ongoing series of attacks.

Following a World Court ruling on state responsibility for terrorist groups in Honduras, it would also be possible to argue that the Afghan government holds some responsibility in such a case. Yet even if these arguments are accepted, the legitimate response must aim at military targets, try to avoid civilian casualties and be proportionate—which, given the scale of attack on the United States, still gives a lot of leeway. The United States—or the United Nations—could also set out to arrest and try all those involved, although it also would have the right to use violence against anyone who resisted arrest.

Of course, there is little chance that the United States will adopt such a measured response. Beyond the cries for revenge, there are also demands that the United States demonstrate its power

Islam”—will surely lead to large numbers of civilian casualties and hardship. Such attacks will not only make it difficult for any government in the region to cooperate with the United States, they will also generate thousands of new recruits for terrorist groups and millions of sympathizers.

There is good reason to distrust the intentions of governments in the Middle East. Many are undemocratic and often unpopular. They may be reluctant to crack down on fundamentalist Islamic groups that focus their hatred on the United States or Israel out of fear that such groups might then turn against them. Although the only effective way to combat the terrorist groups of the region would be with the cooperation of governments in the Middle East, they would need something from the United States or the rest of the world to reward their assistance. Yet help from these governments, especially if it was seen as an alliance with the United States, could backfire politically, unleashing more popular support for militant fundamentalism.

That might be lessened, however, if Middle Eastern governments truly democratized themselves, as part of an economic and political development package. Democracy is no sure-fire antidote to Islamic fundamentalism, but it is the best long-term bet. It will not be easy to ask for both democratic reform and action against terrorists, but anything less would risk a greater version of the same “blowback” from past U.S. interventions that plagues the country now. After all, bin Laden rose to prominence as part of the U.S.-funded, CIA-assisted Afghan fundamentalist war against the Soviets during the '80s.

Massive military attacks are also likely to alienate many of the diverse range of leaders outside the region, not just Europe but also Russia and China, who have lined up in support of the United States. The broader the network of cooperation, the easier it will be to put pressure on states like Pakistan or Afghanistan that may be harboring whoever is responsible.

At home, the war frenzy risks provoking threats to civil liberties and democracy for all Americans, but especially Arabs or other Muslims living in the United States. That may come partly in deference to any actions taken in the name of security. It may also come with Congress giving the President carte blanche or encouraging the CIA, which has

not provided needed intelligence about terrorist groups, to return to its bad old ways (starting with lifting restrictions on working with known human rights violators).

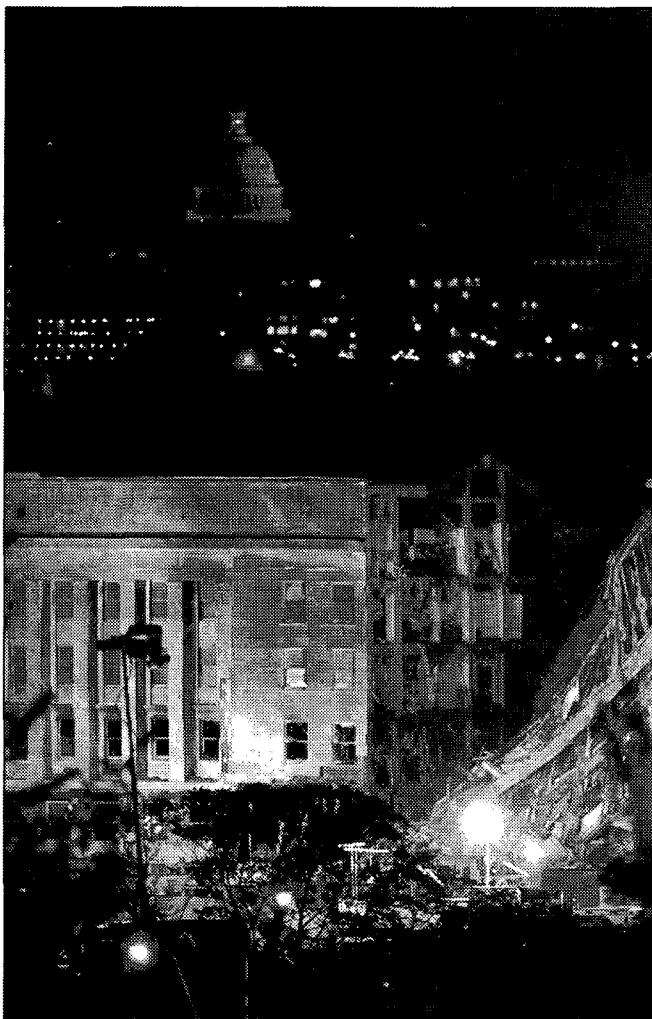
The dangers are perhaps made even greater because the target is a shadowy, fetishized enemy—“terrorism”—ripped out of any social or historical context that would help us understand and deal with the roots of terror. For example, *New Republic* editor Peter Beinart is already viciously attempting—in an updated version of McCarthyism—to link the domestic anti-globalization movement to anti-American terrorism and demands that the movement must choose between America and the terrorists. He writes: “Domestic political dissent is immoral without a prior statement of national solidarity, a choosing of sides.”

The key to resolving the ongoing problem of terrorism from the Middle East is a solution of the Palestinian-Israeli conflict. While the *Wall Street Journal* editorialized that the terrorist attacks proved the folly of appeasement, there has been no appeasement of Palestinians. Indeed, there has been little from the Bush administration at all, except a disengaged but lockstep support for Israel.

The United States has also lost its limited credibility as a neutral broker. At this point, a multilateral intervention, involving the European Union

and possibly the Security Council, to promote a peace agreement would be more promising, even if diplomatically unwieldy. The grand bargain must include not only security for Israel and a Palestinian state, but a regional strategy of cooperation against terrorism, deliberate steps toward democracy, and a plan for economic development and poverty reduction.

Needless to say, it will not be quick or easy to reach such an agreement, but the level of worldwide unity and concern prompted by the terrorist attacks on the United States opens the door of opportunity. While the world will tolerate and even support limited military actions aimed at bringing the perpetrators of the terrorist attacks and their backers to justice, the political and diplomatic unity needed for a long-term solution will be shattered by widespread military action. The United States will exercise real strength if it takes the firm but principled high road to justice and peace. It will demonstrate the futility of its own military might if it resorts to war. ■



BOB HOULIHAN/US NAVY/GETTY IMAGES

9/11/01

GAME OVER

THE ILLUSION OF WAR WITHOUT CASUALTIES

By Naomi Klein

Now is the time in the game of war when we dehumanize our enemies. They are utterly incomprehensible, their acts unimaginable, their motivations senseless. They are "madmen" and their states are "rogue." Now is not the time for more understanding—just better intelligence.

These are the rules of the war game.

Feeling people will no doubt object to this characterization: War is not a game. It is real lives ripped in half; it is lost sons, daughters, mothers and fathers, each with a dignified story. This act of terror was reality of the harshest kind, an act that makes all other acts seem suddenly frivolous, game-like.

It's true: War is most emphatically not a game. And perhaps it will never again be treated as one. Perhaps September 11, 2001 will mark the end of the shameful era of the video game war.

Watching the coverage on Tuesday was a stark contrast to the last time I sat glued to a television set watching a real-time war on CNN. The Space Invader battlefield of the Gulf War had almost nothing in common with what we have seen this week. Back then, instead of real buildings exploding over and over again, we saw only sterile bomb's-eye views of concrete targets—there and then gone. Who was in these abstract polygons? We never found out.

Since the Gulf War, American foreign policy has been based on a single brutal fiction: that the U.S. military can intervene in conflicts around the world—in Iraq, Kosovo, Israel—without suffering any U.S. casualties. This is a country that has come to believe in the ultimate oxymoron: a safe war.

The safe war logic is, of course, based on the technological ability to wage a war exclusively from the air. But it also relies on the deep conviction that no one would dare mess with the United States—the one remaining superpower—on its own soil.

This conviction has, until Tuesday, allowed Americans to remain blithely unaffected by—even uninterested in—international conflicts in which they are key protagonists. Americans don't get daily coverage on CNN of the ongoing bombings in Iraq, nor are they treated to human-interest stories on the devastating effects of economic sanctions on that country's children. After the 1998 bombing of a pharmaceutical factory in Sudan (mistaken for a chemical weapons facility), there weren't too many follow-up reports about what the loss of vaccine manufacturing did to disease prevention in the region.

And when NATO bombed civilian targets in Kosovo—including markets, hospitals, refugee convoys, passenger trains and a TV station—NBC didn't do "streeter" interviews with survivors about how shocked they were by the indiscriminate destruction.

The United States has become expert in the art of sanitizing and dehumanizing acts of war committed elsewhere. Domestically, war is no longer a national obsession, it's a

business that is now largely outsourced to experts. This is one of the country's many paradoxes: though the engine of globalization around the world, the nation has never been more inward looking, less worldly.

No wonder Tuesday's attack, in addition to being horrifying beyond description, has the added horror of seeming, to many Americans, to have arrived entirely out of the blue. Wars rarely come as a complete shock to the country under attack, but it's fair to say that this one did. On CNN, USA Today reporter Mike Walter was asked to sum up the reaction on the street. What he said was: "Oh my god, oh my god, oh my god, I just can't believe it."

The idea that one could ever be prepared for such inhuman terror is absurd. However, viewed through the U.S. television networks, Tuesday's attack seemed to come less from another country than another planet. The events were reported not so much by journalists as by the new breed of brand-name celebrity anchors who have made countless cameos in Time Warner movies about apocalyptic terrorist attacks on the United States—now, incongruously reporting on the real thing. And for a bizarre split second on Tuesday night, CNN's logo "America Under Attack" disappeared and in its place flashed a logo that said "Fighting Fat"—an eerie ghost graphic that the day before had passed as news.

The United States is a country that believed itself not just at peace but war-proof, a self-perception that would come as quite a surprise to most Iraqis, Palestinians and Colombians. Like an amnesiac, the United States has woken up in the middle of a war, only to find out the war has been going on for years.

Did the United States deserve to be attacked? Of course not. That suggestion is ugly and dangerous. But here's a different question that must be asked: Did U.S. foreign policy create the conditions in which such twisted logic could flourish, a war not so much on U.S. imperialism but on perceived U.S. imperviousness?

The era of the video game war in which the U.S. is always at the controls has produced a blinding rage in many parts of the world, a rage at the persistent asymmetry of suffering. This is the context in which twisted revenge-seekers make no other demand than that American citizens share their pain.

Since the attack, U.S. politicians and commentators have repeated the mantra that the country will go on with business as usual. The American way of life, they insist, will not be interrupted. It seems an odd claim to make when all evidence points to the contrary. War, to butcher a phrase from the old Gulf War days, is the mother of all interruptions. As well it should be. The illusion of war without casualties has been forever shattered.

A blinking message is up on our collective video game console: Game Over. ■

Practically Speaking

By Kim Phillips-Fein

Several years ago, Richard Rorty gave a speech on the origins of the American labor movement. It was, he said, "a blood-drenched history of violent struggle." Winning the

The Metaphysical Club: A Story of Ideas in America

By Louis Menand
Farrar, Straus and Giroux
546 pages, \$27

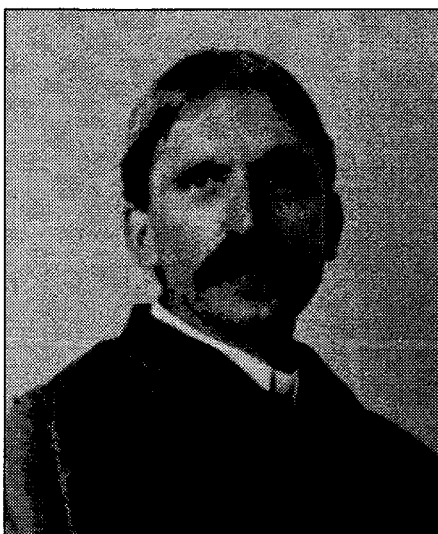
smallest reforms—the eight-hour day, the five-day week—required near-revolutionary commitment from workers who had to be willing to undertake "repeated and deliberate criminal acts." The speech—called "Labor's Flag Is Deepest Red"—was striking, but still more so was the fact that Rorty gave it: Here was a leading pragmatist who seemed to believe that simple political victories require an absolute faith, an unwillingness to treat one's beliefs as though they permit compromise.

The original American pragmatists, who wrote in the era of Homestead and Pullman, would have been surprised to hear it delivered by one of their number. As Louis Menand's excellent new history of pragmatism, *The Metaphysical Club*, shows, the "fear of violence" spurred the intellectual development of the first pragmatic thinkers. Pragmatism, he suggests, was born in a wave of late-19th century revulsion against political ideology. One of its major inspirations was hatred of the Civil War, when abolitionists "marched the nation toward self-destruction in the name of an abstraction," and the style of thought gained popularity at the *fin-de-siècle* in large part because of widespread fear of a new civil war between labor and capital.

Menand hails pragmatism as America's great philosophical contribution to the Western tradition, its optimistic plasticity and bright-eyed hostility to theory the natural intellectual offspring of a land of prosperity and reform. He admires the pragmatists' willingness to snap the moorings binding them to the past, and the sense of human possibility that result-

ed from their jarringly cheerful break with tradition.

Well known for balancing a double career as an English professor at the City University of New York and a *New Yorker* writer, Menand is also, like the pragmatists, no friend of scholarly jargon, elaborate theory or hyper-specialization, and *The Metaphysical Club* is clear and elegant in style. But even as Menand celebrates pragmatism's flexibility, he also suggests the extent to which pragmatism—both at the end of the 19th century and in its reinvigoration today—is the product of a conservative political mood.



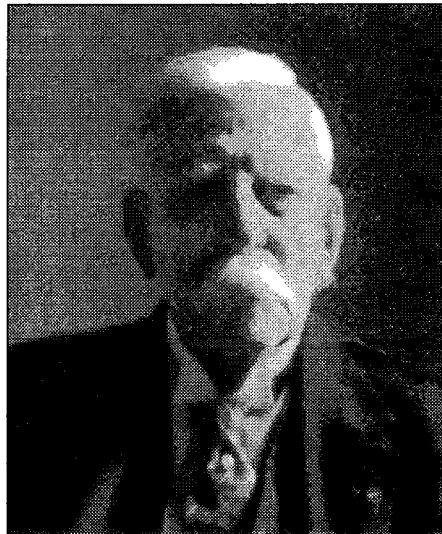
John Dewey (left) and Oliver Wendell Holmes

Shadowing its embrace of openness and experimentation, its constant willingness to re-invent the world and the self, there is a darker aspect to pragmatism, a tinge of anti-radicalism that borders on ideology itself.

The *Metaphysical Club* (the name was ironic, since all its members abhorred metaphysics) is more than a clever title. There was a real club for a few years in Cambridge in the 1870s, though, like Groucho Marx's, it was one that none of its members wanted to claim. While it is briefly mentioned in the letters of Charles Peirce, and disparagingly noted in those of Henry James (who was not a member, but

whose brother William was), none of its participants say a word about it anywhere. Yet it was the meeting place for the best-known pragmatic thinkers—William James, Oliver Wendell Holmes, Peirce—as well as influential hangers-on like depressive alcoholic Chauncey Wright, whose nihilistic mutterings seem to have influenced all of the greats.

The absence of the Metaphysical Club from the memoirs of its members reflects the discomfort all of them felt for the label of pragmatism. James coined the term to describe Peirce's philosophy, but he would have preferred to describe his own thought as "humanism." John Dewey—who was a bit too young to be a member of the original Club—liked "instrumentalism" instead, while Holmes pronounced pragmatism



an "amusing humbug." Even Peirce, for whose benefit it was invented, had little use for the word until it was established enough to have some PR value. Then, he changed it to an infelicitous neologism—"pragmaticism"—to distinguish his work from that of Dewey and James.

It seems fitting that the leading pragmatic thinkers should have been unwilling to identify themselves as such. Doubt, after all, was the hallmark of their philosophy. Theirs was a school of opposition to schools. As James wrote, they had in common "a method only": to oppose "rationalism" and "intellectualism," and to treat anything that reached for the grandiosity of philosophy with a bemusement occasionally

bordering on scorn. They laid their faith in rational empiricism and methodical effort—trying things to see what worked, what brought order to a chaotic society or lessened the pain of human existence—instead of formal theory or abstractions about truth and virtue.

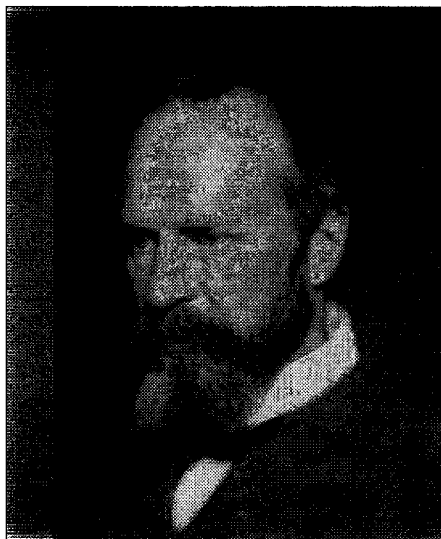
In the context of the late 19th century, this meant breaking with the pompous creeds of Social Darwinism and legal formalism, making possible the reforms of the Progressive era. As James put it, the pragmatists sought “the open air and possibilities of nature, as against dogma, artificiality and the pretense of finality in truth.”

Yet at the same time, the pragmatic thinkers were tentative about everything they deemed most important. On the one hand, they celebrated the open-

solution to the *fin-de-siècle* crisis of authority in American life—the decline of small-town communities, the decreasing prestige of the clergy, the unfamiliar dilemmas of the modern world. Pragmatism freed people at the turn of the century from allegiance to old, outmoded schemas—like a metaphysical belief in the infallibility of *laissez-faire*—opening the way for government action and reform.

The idiosyncratic lives of the pragmatists certainly suggest that their embrace of indecision was more than a philosophical creed. William James, for example, was famously incapable of making up his mind. It took him years to decide to marry his sweetheart. When trying to determine whether to

revolt not simply against formalism but against political ideology. The pragmatist philosophers rejected abstraction, he suggests, because they feared that excessive certainty would lead to violence. If people were willing to die for their ideas, they would be willing to kill others for them as well. This, Menand argues, was the lesson that they learned in the Civil War: The passion of the abolitionists—their “infatuation with an idea”—had led to mass death. In the late 19th century, it seemed that the revolt against capitalism and the struggles of workers threatened to do the same: “In a time when the chance of another civil war did not seem remote, a philosophy that argued against the idolatry of ideas was possibly the only philosophy on which a progressive politics could have been successfully mounted.”



William James (left) and Chauncey Wright

endedness of the world, claiming vast reforming powers for will, idealism and reason. Yet there was something diminutive about their treatment of ideas, their relish at puncturing any “fighting faith.” They were similarly ambiguous about ends and outcomes. Ideas were supposed to be justified by the ends that they made possible—as James put it, “truth happens to an idea”—but how was one to recognize what the worthy end might be?

What makes Menand’s interpretation of the pragmatists unique is his suggestion that this paralyzing uncertainty was precisely what they were hoping to achieve. Other scholars of pragmatism have portrayed the philosophy as the

retire from teaching at Harvard in 1905, his diary would one day read “Resign!” and the next, “Don’t resign!” and the third, “Resign?” (He wound up staying one more year.) Charles Peirce’s whole life—punctuated by sexual scandal and bouts of unemployment, and ending in an obscure, impoverished old age—was one long law of errors. The personal insecurity and anxiety of the pragmatists made them curiously suitable advocates for a philosophy that held self-doubt as its highest virtue.

But Menand goes further. He suggests that—in addition to teaching that “people are masters of their own destinies,” an appropriate philosophy for a society in flux—pragmatism is a political position, a

Oliver Wendell Holmes is Menand’s best example of the relationship between pragmatism and political disillusionment. When Holmes was a college student, he was a fervent believer in anti-slavery. His father, the doctor-poet, was active in Boston’s abolitionist circles, and when the war came, Holmes left Harvard before the semester was finished, rushing off to join the Army so quickly that he almost missed getting his degree. He was, Menand says, a “student radical.” But Holmes quickly became horrified with his war. According to Menand, he systematically destroyed every letter he wrote that mentioned his abolitionist sympathies or his belief in the justice of the cause. Invited to fight with the Massachusetts 54th, the all-black regiment, Holmes refused. Fredericksburg, he wrote, was “an infamous butchery in a ridiculous attempt.” He left the war before it was won.

But he never forgot it. Every year for the rest of his life, Holmes drank a glass of wine on the anniversary of Antietam (where he was shot and briefly left for dead behind enemy lines). When he died, two Civil War uniforms were found in his closet, bearing a note saying that the blood upon them was his. Holmes’ pragmatism, Menand suggests, his reluctance to believe in anything too fervently, was the lesson he had learned in the war: that “certitude leads to violence.”

In later life, Holmes would write, “Some kind of despotism is at the bottom of seeking for change. ... I would fight for

some things—but instead of saying that they ought to be I merely say that they are part of the world I like—or should like.”

For Holmes, disdain for theory was intertwined with aversion to political conviction. No faith should be too deeply or confidently held; no position elevated to mandate action. Yet even as Menand shows the pragmatic turn against ideology, he suggests that their worldview was not only one of ironic flexibility, but also of political disappointment. The great jurist’s agnosticism

The notion that ideas are dangerous and we have reached the end of ideology always seems to gain currency when conservatism is on the rise.

was colored by a sense of disengagement and even emptiness. “This is not the kind of world I want to bring anyone else into,” he wrote, and had no children. In 1932, a few years before his death, Holmes broke into tears reading Marion Frankfurter (Felix’s wife) a poem about the Civil War. After Holmes’ death, Lewis Einstein said that Holmes had told him, “After the Civil War, the world never seemed quite right again.”

Unlike many other studies of pragmatism, *The Metaphysical Club* makes it clear how much it was often bound up with hostility toward broader kinds of political idealism. The rejection of the faiths of the Civil War era, after all, came at a time when the federal government was denying any responsibility for the slaves that the war had set free. In an exchange with Dewey, Jane Addams declared the war futile, because “we freed the slaves by war & now had to free them all over again individually, & pay the costs of the war & reckon with the added bitterness of the Southerners alike.”

But saying this in the 1890s, while Jim Crow was on the rise, was not so much an argument against ideological warfare as it was one in defense of the reigning

ideology—doing nothing to protect the rights of African-Americans. Similarly, the fears of the pragmatists that the passionate faiths of socialists and anarchists might lead to violence seems to overlook the fact that the deeply entrenched desire of employers in the late 19th century to keep things as they were resulted in repression, arrests of striking workers and the calling out of the state militias.

On a deeper level, *The Metaphysical Club* shows the political conditions that underpin one of the recurrent themes of American intellectual life: the periodic rejection of ideology. Americans are supposed to be quintessentially pragmatic people. But in reality, the notion that ideas are dangerous and that we have reached the end of ideology always seems to surge to the foreground when conservatism is on the rise. In Menand’s interpretation, pragmatism was forged against the backdrop of the decline of the egalitarian dreams of the Reconstruction era.

The most famous renunciations of all political faith came at the height of McCarthyism, when Judith Shklar proclaimed “the end of radicalism” while Daniel Bell wrote, “ideology ... has come to a dead end.” Seymour Martin Lipset wrote that “politics is now boring,” famously quoting a Swedish journalist to the effect that “the only issues are whether the metal workers should get a nickel more an hour, the price of milk should be raised, or old-age pensions extended.” Today, the prominence of pragmatists like Rorty has its roots in the end of Communism and the political defeats of the ’60s. In moments of political loss, all radical visions start to appear utopian and chiliaristic, easy to denounce as destructive nihilism.

Yet at the same time, *The Metaphysical Club* suggests that this is only temporary. As new political movements emerge—combining, as they always do, immediate and practical reforms with a broader vision of transformation—the old ambivalence about commitment falls away. Even the pragmatists knew that it sometimes mattered most to know which side you were on. During the Pullman Strike of 1894, John Dewey—then a young philosopher at the University of Chicago—met one of the strikers on a train. “I only talked with him 10 or 15 minutes, but when I got through my

nerves were more thrilled than they had been for years; I felt as if I had better resign my job teaching and follow him round till I got into him. One lost all sense of the right or wrong of things in admiration of his almost fanatic sincerity and earnestness, & in admiration of the magnificent combination that was going on.”

Dewey proclaimed himself “a good deal of an anarchist,” and commented at the end of the strike, “I think the few thousand train cars burned up a pretty cheap price to pay—it was the stimulus necessary to direct attention, & it might easily have taken more to get the social organism thinking.” Forty years later, during the New Deal, Dewey would use the lessons that he’d learned during Pullman to criticize businessmen who organized Liberty Leagues—for whom old-age pensions and the question of whether to pay a nickel more an hour were issues of great ideological and political significance. “Democracy,” he wrote then, “is a fighting faith.”

What might this erstwhile anarchist have made of Seattle and Genoa? To tweak Russell Jacoby, perhaps it is time to declare an end to the end of ideology once more. ■

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Choice of a Generation

By Hillary Frey

Listen: If you're a feminist and you're married, or about to get married, or if you've ever thought about getting married, or even if you simply respect the choice to be married, stay away from *Here Comes the Bride: Women, Weddings and the Marriage Mystique*. Self-proclaimed

Here Comes the Bride
By Jaclyn Geller
Four Walls Eight Windows
428 pages, \$15

Young Wives' Tales
Edited by Jill Corral and Lisa Miya-Jervis
Seal Press
320 pages, \$16.95

"spinster-for-life" Jaclyn Geller has written a book that will only piss you off. Here's what Geller, a graduate student in English, says in the opening of her book: "To achieve real social equity women ... must dispense with the stories they tell themselves about wedlock: fairy tales about personal choice, unique, private love, individualism, and self expression. We must stop repeating the absurd mantra 'It's okay to be single,' and adopt the more aggressive stance that 'it's not okay to be married.'"

But eradicating marriage isn't high on any feminist agenda I've come across, and Geller is already taking heat for suggesting that it should be. Writing in *Salon*, Amy Benfer spent roughly 4,000 words mocking *Here Comes the Bride* a few weeks back, arguing that a major gain from second-wave feminism was the power to choose; shouldn't women be trusted to make the decision whether to marry for themselves? A characteristically shallow profile in the *New York Observer* focused more on the woman than the work, making much of Geller's makeup- and perfume-wearing ways, and the fact that she has a cop (who, she tells them, she "fucked" on the first date) for a boyfriend.

But one needn't tease Geller to slam her overwrought, shrill, annoying and disappointing book. The tension between feminism and marriage—a very real thing for feminists, especially those of us third-wavers—should not be waved off as nothing. Still, a feminist considering marriage should not be so much worried about betraying the sisterhood, as Geller would like to have it. If she's worried at all, it should be over the possibility of betraying herself.

Here's the question: Are marriage and feminism compatible? Geller says no way. In her opinion, rejecting marriage is the political act that today's young feminists should be concentrating on; she hopes with her book to "dissuade many would-be wives from draping themselves

conspiracy, cooked up and maintained to keep women down. *Here Comes the Bride* falls way short of that goal.

Instead of bolstering a feminist argument against marriage with facts, stats or testimony, Geller focuses on how weddings have become a kind of spectator sport: packed with people, exclusive and expensive. No doubt she's right, and for a while her disgust for the privileged union is pretty gripping. But as it stretched over 426 pages, I felt I was being beaten into submission.

It's a shame, not only because the book gives you one whopper of a headache, but because there are better critiques about marriage's past, present and future in this country to be made. For instance, Geller barely touches on how inextricably marriage is woven into the fabric of the Constitution and nearly every component of our government (as historian Nancy Cott does clearly, evenly, and thoroughly with *Public Vows: A History of Marriage and the Nation*)—the shocking truths of which could have won her some converts. Neither does she give more than a cursory nod to those thinkers—St. Augustine, Francis Bacon, Mary Astell, William Godwin and Mary Daly—who she claims "inform her analysis."

Instead she bitterly close-reads bridal magazines, *Cosmopolitan* and various wedding planners available at Barnes and Noble; recounts episodes of *Sex and the City* and *Ally McBeal*; and cites celebrity ceremonies profiled in *InStyle*. At one point she goes "undercover" to a huge bridal shop in Brooklyn and pretends to be a bride in search of a gown. In another episode, she's off to Bloomingdale's

to "fake" register for a china pattern. She claims that the wedding reception, where "couple fascism" is "nowhere so powerful," is merely a tool to thrust "single" people together in a minimarriage market; the honeymoon destination is "a place where [the couple] can copulate day and night without fear of interruption." In closing, she scrutinizes films like



TERRY LABAN

in white and walking down the aisle." (Note: It's no better if you wear pink, purple or plaid; Geller unleashes her worst venom on those who attempt to have a "quirky" wedding.) Viewing marriage as "a political arrangement that merits a political critique," Geller promises a political dissection of the institution, one that will expose marriage as a real

Betsy's Wedding, which exalts the wedding as a vehicle for self expression, and *American Beauty*—which exposes marriage for what Geller thinks it really is: a sexually boring union that will turn you into a control-freak shrew and your husband into a pedophile.

Sound silly? In a lot of ways it's beyond that. For one thing, marriages and weddings are two separate things—both entail a lot of work, but one results in a huge party. By critiquing both simultaneously, Geller loses her focus. We need a political analysis of marriage from a strong feminist point of view, but we don't need a book that condescends and spends so much time analyzing wedding propaganda we'd never take seriously anyway. Geller doesn't seem to realize that, by focusing on the very propaganda she so hates instead of talking to real brides, she undermines her own arguments. Sure, the magazines, TV shows, films and books that Geller spends so much time combing through do have some sort of unconscious effect on all of us. But that effect is not the thing that makes so many people want a lifelong commitment and a big party to kick it off.

I am not defending the white wedding, or the multibillion-dollar industry attached to it. Or engagement rings, which I find just as terrifying as Geller does. Or flatware registries, disco DJs, garter rituals, bachelorette parties or bouquet tossing. Geller explains that her world would be a society in which "no single model of relationship would enjoy privileged status," where everyone enjoyed the same legal protections. Something I think many others—married, single, straight, gay, bi, whatever—would agree on. But it remains unclear how calling on feminists to boycott an institution that some people really do want to join—for intensely personal reasons—would further this political goal. And, anyway, as Geller herself concedes, marriage today is hardly what it was when our mothers got hitched.

For proof, take a look at the essays in *Young Wives' Tales: New Adventures in Love and Partnership*. "Many young feminists want the love, support and companionship that come with long-term commitment, but we don't necessarily want the rigid gender roles, strict monogamy or 'settling down' that have

traditionally defined it," note editors Jill Corral and Lisa Miya-Jervis in their introduction to the collection. The contributors have approached the idea of lifelong monogamy and the institution of marriage with a healthy dose of skepticism, though many have found ways to adapt the institution to their needs and desires.

The institution of marriage is unfair to all those who don't fall under its purview, who are ineligible for its legal benefits.

The actual relationship responsibilities the various couples (or, in one case, a threesome) have worked out are not so shocking or unconventional by today's standards; splitting up household matters like cooking, cleaning and childcare are hardly novel ideas. But these essays are valuable because of their intensely personal nature; each one is a well-rendered, at times moving, confession. These women describe how they've balanced serious long-distance relationships with serious career moves (and, obviously, writing); designed wedding ceremonies that incorporate religious traditions with funk; decided to make commitments after adulthoods of bisexuality; or let another person into their lives after a long spell of

singlehood. The tensions described are fresh. Indeed, unlike the relationship-advice garbage that Geller spends so much time acidly respewing, these essays address real problems and questions that a lot of people—men and women, gay and lesbian, feminist and not—have concerning commitment.

Marriage was historically first and foremost a contract—hardly the expression of emotional commitment and love that it is supposed to represent today. More often than not, it was an agreement between a man and a woman's family that stripped the bride of rights, locked her into a relationship from which there is no escape, deprived her of property and wealth and generally stifled her development. But it isn't anymore. And wedding ceremonies—especially those involving feminists—are not always the white spectacles that Geller would have you believe them to be.

Still, what is undeniable is that marriage, as an institution used to promote heterosexual relationships between men and women, is unfair to all those who don't fall under its purview, who are ineligible for its legal benefits. But is calling on feminists to boycott marriage the most efficient way to change this? Geller doesn't convince me. And if anything, the essays in *Young Wives' Tales* assure me that it's not. Don't we want a world with more choices? That has to be better than one with less. ■

Hillary Frey is assistant literary editor of *The Nation*.

Ghost in the Machine

By Joshua Klein

FO's 1991 album *Frequencies*, only the third release by the then young but now formidably influential U.K. label Warp Records, begins with a definition. "What is House?" asks a

Vespertine
Björk
Elektra Records

robotic voice, which then proceeds to answer its own question. "Technotronic, KLF or something you live in. To me,

House is Phuture, Pierre, Fingers, Adonis, etc. The pioneers of the hypnotic groove, Brian Eno, Tangerine Dream, Kraftwerk, Depeche Mode and the Yellow Magic Orchestra."

Ten years later, some of the names have faded or changed or been exchanged for others, but by and large the rules of electronic music remain the same. In the digital age of sequencers and samplers, influences are limitless, and electronic musicians can absorb as many of them as they

desire and still spit out something relatively unique. If future historians ever want to know what sowed the seeds of rock music's slow demise, they need only look back to LFO's open-minded statement of purpose.

Of course, rock music is not going to die any time soon, especially since some of the brightest bands have begun to adhere to the most defining aspects of electronic music, namely the endless palette of sound and the amorphous structure enabled by synthesizer technology. In fact, even if you added artists like Black Sabbath, the Pixies, Prince, Public Enemy or the Ramones to the LFO list, the gist would remain more or less the same. More importantly, such artists would not even seem out of place, as the sponge-like property of electronic music capably encompasses mere guitars and drums as well as state-of-the-art beatboxes and keyboards. In a game of rock/paper/scissors, electronic music is the paper that envelops rock, just as rock contains elements of all that came before it. (Metaphor watchers can forget about scissors: Consider it the commercial crap that just won't cut it.)

Despite electronic music's malleable stylistic trump card, the digital clubland revolution of the '90s never really happened, at least not as predicted. Despite fluke hits by the likes of Underworld, Daft Punk and Prodigy, or even the by now widespread name recognition of edgier artists like Orbital or Aphex Twin, electronic music failed to travel far beyond trend pieces and tight social circles to truly make a dent on popular music. Or did it? While programmers, beatmasters and synth tweekers were hardly catapulted to stardom, they have left a surprisingly extensive mark on what we listen to and even the way music is made.

The vast majority of acts in the Top 40 now record their albums and singles on computers, using the kind of high-tech digital editing long enlisted by electronic artists. Further, the music itself often relies on elaborately programmed or sequenced synthesizers and

small handful of artists able to maintain their reputations as both pop stars and edgy experimental paragons. Of these, most fade in prominence as trends shift and fads wear out their welcome; consider artists like Laurie Anderson, David Byrne or even David Bowie, all

of whom have dabbled in multimedia and specifically electronic music while ensconced in the mainstream, however tenuously.



Hers is an extraterrestrial voice constantly trying to break free from the constraints of the corporeal.

One exception to the rule, someone who keeps getting more popular (or at least more prominent) even as she grows stranger and more ambitious, is Björk Guðmundsdóttir. Like a lot of Icelandic citizens, the singular Björk has little use for her surname; phone books in Iceland are indeed alphabetized by first name alone. But to non-Scandinavian ears, Björk's name alone sounds fresh and new, like something a synthesizer might blurt out. Björk could be a slight variation on bleep, bloop or boing.

After leaving her quirky band the Sugarcubes, Björk began her exploration of electronic music in earnest, initially via the tutelage of Soul II Soul producer Nellee Hooper but later via a bevy of notable producers, including Graham Massey of 808 State, Tricky and Howie B. In light of her quick evolution, Björk's first solo album,

1993's *Debut*, stands as her most straightforward (though still novel) effort, while subsequent albums sound increasingly foreign.

The eclectic roster of producers behind 1995's *Post* helped Björk navigate techno and trip-hop, while the corresponding 1996 remix album *Telegram* reconfigured the music entirely as IDM (Intelligent Dance Music, which basically means dance music that you can't dance to or, alternatively, dance music you can listen to). Dismissed by some as an irritating eccentric, Björk has

drum machines. For example, the beats that producer Timbaland provides to Missy Elliott's songs get played on the radio and in clubs, but in many ways they're every bit as remarkable and complex as the aural fractals composed by underground favorites Autechre.

With so many artists dabbling in or even fully embracing electronic music, you'd think more musicians would bridge the beatwise underground with the mainstream; that is to say, bridge the more abstract qualities of sound with the more accessible qualities of song. But so far there's only been a

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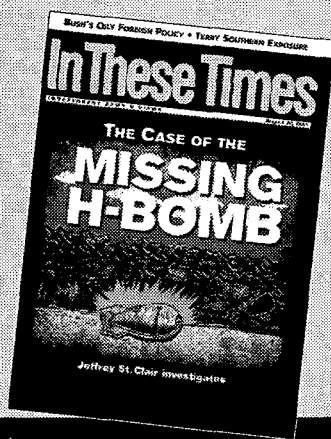
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nonetheless never ceased pushing the limits of pop music.

Björk's breakthrough arrived with 1997's *Homogenic*, not coincidentally produced by LFO's Mark Bell. The disc further blurred the distinction between song and soundscape, with Björk's dynamic and distinct voice just another instrument in the gorgeous yet challenging compositions. With strings meshing with abrasive and foreign beats, the disc was an inspiring hybrid, a mix of the familiar and the invented, like someone's imagination come to life.

Fittingly, Björk capped off her greatest achievement with an astounding video, courtesy of director Chris Cunningham. "All Is Full Of Love" featured Björk as a lonely cyborg, creating and then making love to another cyborg cast in her image. The message worked on multiple levels. What Björk was doing musically was so special that she needed to create someone who fully understood it. Or Björk the human had been subsumed by Björk the machine, whose ability to reproduce mechanically did not replace the need for physical contact. But ultimately the song and video demonstrated that the chilly and strange sounds of Björk's electronic music did not preclude real emotion, however inhuman it might sound.

Contrast this with Björk's 2000 follow-up, *Dancer in the Dark*. In the film, Björk is in many ways pure emotion, a non-actor directed by instinct as much as instruction. Her physical presence in the film coheres with the industrial clang of the corresponding music, sequenced sweeps and stomps that sound somewhat like Björk's most recent solo work, synthesized yet somehow still natural. How fitting that Björk should earn a number of awards and nominations both as an actor and composer; it's hard to know where Björk the person stops and her aura of creativity begins.

Which brings us to *Vespertine*, Björk's most sedate and mysterious disc to date. Gone is Bell, replaced by a disparate cast of players and programmers including San Francisco's Matmos, New York harpist Zeena Parkins and an Inuit choir. Never has Björk sounded so much a part of the music, so much so that her lyrics seem almost secondary (not neces-

sarily a bad thing, considering that one is written by pretentious provocateur Harmony Korine). Björk succeeds so well because she, unlike many of her predecessors, has been able to seamlessly blur the line between electronic music and her almost uncomfortably bare and intimate organic presence. In fact, *Vespertine* raises some interesting questions, mostly pertaining to presumptions commonly made about electronic music and ambient techno. Just when does a background drone of a soundscape become a song? Conversely, how does an artist transform a song into an ambient soundscape?

In Björk's case these musical quandaries are handled with typical ingenuity, best exemplified through her live performances. Visibly contrasting the computer-based source of her songs with some of the most traditional instruments, Björk is bringing idiosyncratic chamber orchestras out on the road with her to support *Vespertine*. Her tour includes a troupe of string players, a choir, Parkins and her producers and current collaborators Matmos (whose own contributions to the blurring of the line between the electronic and organic include sampling bodily functions and slurping liposuction machines).

These outings are her most ambitious to date, as Björk will appear in such non-rock settings as opera houses, all sold out well in advance. But she also plans to appear unannounced, in a handful of small clubs where she can perform without amplification. Only a performer as brave as Björk would dare to attempt to replicate the atmospheric sounds of her music without the helpful crutch of microphones and pre-programmed machines. Like the self-sustaining cyborg of her fantasy, Björk doesn't even need to be plugged in to express herself. She's like a force of nature, an extraterrestrial voice connected to an all too terrestrial body that's constantly trying to break free from the constraints of the corporeal. She is literally the ghost in the machine, an artifact of humanity wrapped up amidst all those wires and plugs, coursing through a maze of circuitry like a jolt of electricity. ■

Joshua Klein is a freelance writer who lives in Chicago.

Swedish Meatballs

By Joshua Rothkopf

People are cracking up at the fuzz-headed but nonetheless strident commune-dwellers of *Together*, which is a good thing because I'm pretty sure it's a comedy. The laughs come from

Together

Written and directed by
Lukas Moodysson

two places, both generally benign. First there's the sweet political nostalgia for a time—like this movie's sweater-vested Sweden of 1975—when certain people erupted into bearhugs at the news of Franco's death. (Even toddlers take part in the celebration, as good a moment as any for some quality jumping around.) Then there's the tension of alternative lifestyles in collision, presented here as not unfunny in itself, as when soft-spoken commune resident Göran (Gustaf Hammarsten) takes in his sister Elisabeth (Lisa Lindgren) and her two young children, in flight from an abusive husband. Strolling into the kitchen to meet their new housemates, they find themselves amidst a furious debate on gender expression involving, er, the bared expression of both genders.

I don't believe there's much politics in Lukas Moodysson, who, only two features into his career, seems too exuberant a filmmaker to bear the inevitable comparisons being made to Ingmar Bergman, his famous countryman. That's fine, though. Moodysson's talents are more conservative, but done well and with conviction—an intuitive feel for the swelling pop song (Abba, with unexpected resonance) and an empathy for despairing teens that's refreshingly non-ironic.

Show Me Love, his first film, was about two high-school girls easing uncertainly into a sexual relationship. Its payoff, a literal coming out of the closet, was exhilarating, but almost too facile a finish for a subject that really only begins at that point. *Together* feels broader, more thorough—and it's only after smiling and cringing through most of its capsulized episodes of flailing dogma pitted against undeniable personal pain

that you might clue into a dawning sense of resignation. Like the all-night party of Pynchon's short story "Entropy," the events are poised at some kind of expectant unraveling; we've joined the commune right at the bittersweet moment of its ideological splintering.

But Moodysson hasn't the heart for cynicism; he lays out the casualties—vegetarianism, free love, radical activism—with a minimum of hand-wringing, replacing them with an overall

pull is best captured in two awkward displays of parenting: In the first, Elisabeth's kids watch in shock as their estranged father, Rolf (Michael Nyqvist), makes a scene at a Chinese restaurant upon hearing they won't be getting Christmas presents at the commune (too rampant a display of materialism).

Rolf eventually becomes a drunken menace, getting himself arrested and leaving the kids stranded on a chilly Stockholm street. So it's a strangely comforting sight when the hippies' trippily hand-painted VW bus lumbers up to the curb and responsibly spirits them home to bed. The spell is too good to last, as Elisabeth insists on fussing over the pil-



IFC FILMS

When politics get hairy.

acceptance that's unquestionably tamer but no less ambitious. "Solidarity is a word we have to strive for in some way," Göran says early on, and for all the yielding to pragmatism that follows, it's what he and his comrades end up with—a wised-up variety that survives its own revolution.

The spiritual parent here is Alain Tanner's 1976 masterpiece, *Jonah Who Will Be 25 in the Year 2000*, which shares with *Together* not only its historical context and warm utopian spirit—*Jonah* follows eight Swiss outsiders still flung on scruffy trajectories resulting from the political upheavals of 1968—but a similar desperation. As its title suggests, *Jonah* places its faith in a future generation that might make sense of things; now it finally is 25 years later, and Moodysson's children walk the same line. This push and

pulls beneath their slumbering heads, switching them from the usual blue-for-boys, pink-for-girls. Moodysson excels at this delicate staging of inappropriateness; his true theme begins to cohere out of the sullen stares of children forced to tap undeveloped reserves of patience as the adults test the limits of liberation.

Elsewhere, the camera is zoom-happy, a redolent nod to '70s solipsism, but also an amplification of the daily shockwaves rumbling the liberated front: Göran can tell his girlfriend how happy he is for her on the occasion of her first orgasm—with another man—but his brow is troubled for most of *Together*. When many of these dissonances fall away in a final scene of collective euphoria, a sloppy soccer game in the falling snow, it's a moment of such sublime generosity it feels like a gift. ■

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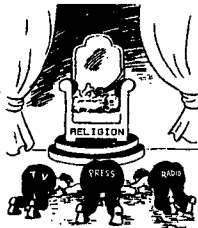
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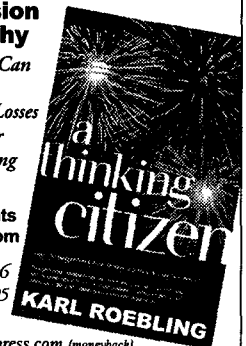
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Continued from page 29

Adam Weinstock—the producer who brought *Naked Boys* to Provincetown—and the Crown & Anchor's owners reacted with a collective "Oh, come on."

"In Provincetown, you can have men in full harness and leather, right in the middle of the day, walking down the main drag," Weinstock points out, pausing to add "so to speak" and chuckle at his pun. "This is at 5 p.m., with the sun out and families walking around. No hassles."

Weinstock and the Crown & Anchor did not shut down the show; the naked boys kept singing; the cease-and-desist orders kept on coming. So did the audience. "When this started, people would say to me, 'What are you going to do?'" Weinstock says, somewhat gleefully. "I said, 'I'm going to add shows.' We went from six to eight performances a week—it turned out to be a publicity dream."

Meanwhile, *Naked Boys Singing!* draped itself in the Bill of Rights. The Crown & Anchor general manager introduced the musical each night by reminding people that "if you don't fight for [First Amendment rights] you can unintentionally give them up." At a thronged September 4 "show cause" hearing, Crown & Anchor lawyer Kenneth Tatarian did everything but take off his shoe and bang it on the podium: "This is a First Amendment case! This case is about nothing but the First Amendment!"

Were anti-democratic elements in the Provincetown power structure really trying to shut down the show, which counts among its tunes politically controversial numbers like "Nothin' But the Radio On" and a paean to hunky Robert Mitchum? The patriot defense was met with skepticism by some outside the *Naked Boys* camp. Like Judith Oset, permit coordinator at the Department of Regulatory Management.

"What you have to remember is, this was a town bylaw that was passed: The town chose by a two-thirds vote to say that we don't want nudity in these areas. It was passed for a specific reason," Oset points out. "Look, it doesn't have anything to do with Provincetown having a liberal outlook or not. There's just some bylaws being broken, and this department will ticket for that."

The "specific reason" Oset mentions is the peep show (or "Adult Arcade," to those in the peep show—er, adult arcade business) that someone tried to open in 1998, which prompted the town to pass the "adult entertainment" ordinance purportedly violated by *Naked Boys Singing!*

Also not sold on the *Naked Boys* free speech defense is Dixie, a manager over at the Post Office Café, another popular nightspot. "Their lawyer was trying to press it as a freedom of speech thing," says Dixie, and you can practically hear his eyes rolling over the phone line. "That's not what it was about. It was about their improperly applying for licensing."

"[The Crown & Anchor] just went about doing the show. They had a cease-and-desist and they continued to do it using the First Amendment," Dixie adds. "It's not a question of freedom of speech, it's a question of going through the proper channels and taking care of business."

In such complaints, Weinstock catches a whiff of sour grapes. He also has a prize theory that—despite the city's contention that an audience complaint prompted their investigation—it was rival club owners, in Provincetown's crowded summer entertainment market, who tried to silence his poor naked boys.

"I really don't feel like saying who it was, because there's no proof," Weinstock says. "But you have to understand that at the Crown & Anchor—the owners are new. They are what could be considered upstarts. And here they take out nine pages of advertising in the *Provincetown Magazine*, they take these huge ads out, these young guys with some newfound money that wasn't made in town. The more established people who have been there longer ..." He pauses for a second. "It's just very tough to make a go of theater in this town sometimes."

"I don't know if it was necessarily the cabaret owners per se [who lodged complaints]," says Dixie at the Post Office Café, adding hastily that it definitely wasn't them. "It didn't bother us—but I know there was some animosity among other owners."

Judith Oset at the licensing board flat out denies that other businessmen were "out to get" the *Naked Boys*. "I don't put any stock in that rumor," she says. "They had no influence in what was going on, other than they're waiting to see the outcome because it certainly might affect their own businesses."

The outcome, when the September 4 hearing at last rolled around (five days before *Naked Boys* was set to close anyway) was that the incomplete licensing application charge was dropped, and the "adult entertainment" bylaw will be re-examined at the next town meeting.

"Can a theater group do the show *Hair* here, say, versus having a peep show or a porno-type activity? It really comes down to that," Oset says.

In other words, it's time for freethinking Provincetown to take on one of the oldest questions of all: Is something theater just because you put it on a stage? Is it adult entertainment just because it's got a bunch of penises in it?

Of course, as Weinstock points out, a lot of people couldn't even get a peep. "Thing is, the space at the Crown & Anchor is not even the greatest space, because the audience seating isn't raked. If you're out in the eighth row, and you're sitting behind someone, well—you really can't see dick." ■

Ben Winters, a writer in New York, contributes frequently to *In These Times*.

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By Ben Winters

There are, alas, no shortage of municipalities in the United States where the citizenry might be expected to revolt if confronted with an all-nude, all-gay musical revue in their midst. Topeka, Kansas, let's say, and probably Salt Lake City, and wherever Trent Lott is from.

But Provincetown, Massachusetts? Provincetown, the bustling beach-front artist's community, the sunlit jewel nestled at the far eastern tip of Cape Cod, the same Provincetown known as one of the nation's premiere gay vacation spots? Provincetown, the legendary home of free-thinkers, where Tennessee Williams wrote and Charles Hawthorne painted and a little something called the Mayflower Compact was cooked up in the early 1620s?

"It's a very gay place," says one longtime resident. "Not like a gay ghetto, though—it has a nice mix of gay and straight, happily coexisting by the sea—you've got people in drag and you've got baby strollers, all running around together."

Among the many, many shows with gay themes that played on Provincetown's cabaret and nightclub circuit this summer—shows like the a capella/drag/barbershop group *The Kinsey Sicks* and the stand-up comedy of queer community fave Margaret Cho—was a slight, unpretentious little romp, imported from New York City, called *Naked Boys Singing!* With no dialogue, no plot and no pants, *Naked Boys* has been a smash for three years now Off Broadway, and its creators have long since begun the lucrative process of licensing the show for regional productions. Versions have been presented without incident in Fort Lauderdale, Houston, Sydney and, oh yes, Rome.

But when the Provincetown *Naked Boys* arrived at the Crown & Anchor Inn on June 24, trouble was waiting. The first "cease and desist" order showed up five days later. According to the normally uncontroversial Provincetown Department of Regulatory Management, *Naked Boys Singing!* was in violation of not one but two town laws.

"You've got people in drag and you've got baby strollers, all running around together."

First, the Crown & Anchor hadn't mentioned on their entertainment license application that the show had nudity in it. So that's a licensing bylaws 4.01(d) violation right there. Plus, *Naked Boys*, by virtue of its location, had run afoul of a zoning regulation on "adult entertainment." The bylaw offers no definition of "adult entertainment," but whatever it is, it better be "at least 500 feet from any school, playground, museum, church, community center, municipal building, nursing home or cemetery."

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